

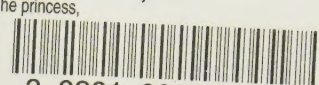
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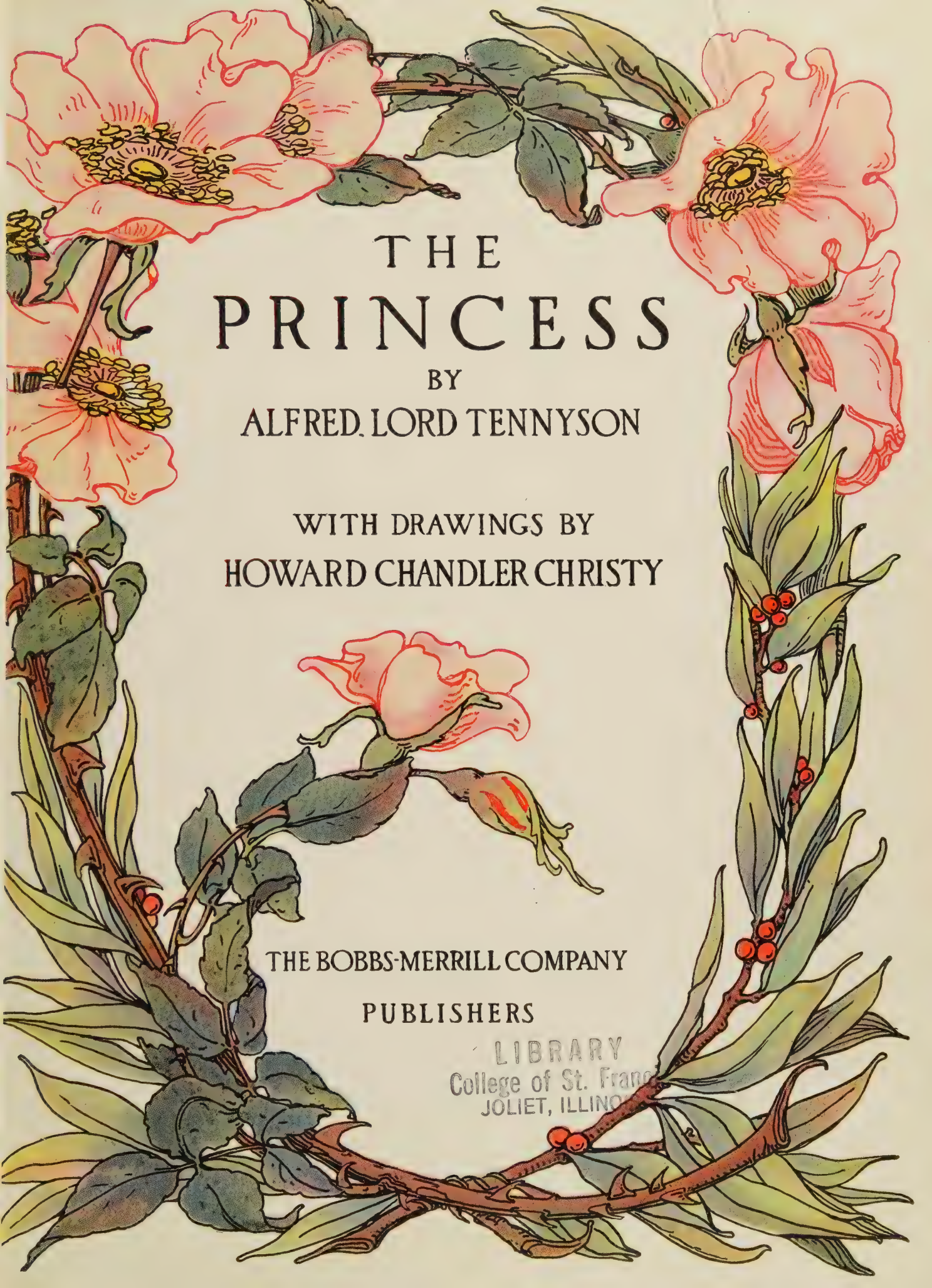


THE PRINCESS

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THE PRINCESS

BY
ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

WITH DRAWINGS BY
HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY

THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

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PROLOGUE





PROLOGUE

SIR WALTER VIVIAN all a summer's day
Gave his broad lawns until the set of sun
Up to the people; thither flock'd at noon
His tenants, wife and child, and thither half
The neighboring borough with their Institute,
Of which he was the patron. I was there
From college, visiting the son,—the son
A Walter too,—with others of our set,
Five others; we were seven at Vivian-place.

And me that morning Walter show'd the
house,
Greek, set with busts. From vases in the hall
Flowers of all heavens, and lovelier than their
names,
Grew side by side; and on the pavement lay
Carved stones of the Abbey-ruin in the park,
Huge Ammonites, and the first bones of Time;
And on the tables every clime and age
Jumbled together; celts and calumets,
Claymore and snow-shoe, toys in lava, fans
Of sandal, amber, ancient rosaries,

Laborious orient ivory sphere in sphere,
The cursed Malayan crease, and battle-clubs
From the isles of palm; and higher on the
walls,
Betwixt the monstrous horns of elk and deer,
His own forefathers' arms and armor hung.

And 'this,' he said, 'was Hugh's at Agin-
court;
And that was old Sir Ralph's at Ascalon.
A good knight he! we keep a chronicle
With all about him,'—which he brought,
and I
Dived in a hoard of tales that dealt with
knights
Half-legend, half-historic, counts and kings
Who laid about them at their wills and died;
And mixt with these a lady, one that arm'd
Her own fair head, and sallying thro'
the gate,
Had beat her foes with slaughter from her
walls.

THE PRINCESS

'O miracle of women,' said the book,
'O noble heart who, being strait-besieged
By this wild king to force her to his wish,
Nor bent, nor broke, nor shunn'd a soldier's
death,

But now when all was lost or seem'd as lost—
Her stature more than mortal in the burst
Of sunrise, her arm lifted, eyes on fire—

Brake with a blast of trumpets from the gate,
And, falling on them like a thunderbolt,
She trampled some beneath her horses' heels,
And some were whelm'd with missiles of the
wall,

And some were push'd with lances from the
rock,

And part were drown'd within the whirling
brook;

O miracle of noble womanhood!

So sang the gallant, glorious chronicle;
And, I all rapt in this, 'Come out,' he said,
'To the Abbey; there is Aunt Elizabeth
And sister Lilia with the rest.' We went—
I kept the book and had my finger in it—
Down thro' the park. Strange was the sight
to me;

For all the sloping pasture murmur'd, sown
With happy faces and with holiday.

There moved the multitude, a thousand heads;
The patient leaders of their Institute
Taught them with facts. One rear'd a font
of stone

And drew, from butts of water on the slope,
The fountain of the moment, playing, now
A twisted snake, and now a rain of pearls,
Or steep-up spout whereon the gilded ball
Danced like a wisp; and somewhat lower down
A man with knobs and wires and vials fired
A cannon! Echo answer'd in her sleep
From hollow fields; and here were telescopes
For azure views; and there a group of girls
In circle waited, whom the electric shock
Dislink'd with shrieks and laughter; round
the lake

A little clock-work steamer paddling plied
And shook the lilies; perch'd about the knolls
A dozen angry models jettied steam;
A petty railway ran; a fire-balloon
Rose gem-like up before the dusky groves
And dropt a fairy parachute and past;
And there thro' twenty posts of telegraph
They flash'd a saucy message to and fro
Between the mimic stations; so that sport
Went hand in hand with science; elsewhere
Pure sport; a herd of boys with clamor bowl'd
And stump'd the wicket; babies roll'd about
Like tumbled fruit in grass; and men and
maids

Arranged a country dance, and flew thro'
light

And shadow, while the twangling violin
Struck up with Soldier-laddie, and overhead
The broad ambrosial aisles of lofty lime
Made noise with bees and breeze from end to
end.

Strange was the sight and smacking of the
time;

And long we gazed, but satiated at length
Came to the ruins. High-arch'd and ivy-
claspt,

Of finest Gothic lighter than a fire,
Thro' one wide chasm of time and frost they
gave

The park, the crowd, the house; but all within
The sward was trim as any garden lawn.

And here we lit on Aunt Elizabeth,
And Lilia with the rest, and lady friends
From neighbor seats; and there was Ralph
himself,

A broken statue propt against the wall,
As gay as any. Lilia, wild with sport,
Half child, half woman as she was, had wound
A scarf of orange round the stony helm,
And robed the shoulders in a rosy silk,
That made the old warrior from his ivied nook
Glow like a sunbeam. Near his tomb a feast
Shone, silver-set; about it lay the guests,
And there we join'd them; then the maiden
aunt

A MEDLEY

Took this fair day for text, and from it
preach'd

An universal culture for the crowd,
And all things great. But we, unworthier,
told

Of college: he had climb'd across the spikes,
And he had squeezed himself betwixt the bars,
And he had breathed the Proctor's dogs; and
one

Discuss'd his tutor, rough to common men,
But honeying at the whisper of a lord;
And one the Master, as a rogue in grain
Veneer'd with sanctimonious theory.

But while they talk'd, above their heads I
saw

The feudal warrior lady-clad; which brought
My book to mind, and opening this I read
Of old Sir Ralph a page or two that rang
With tilt and tourney; then the tale of her
That drove her foes with slaughter from her
walls,

And much I praised her nobleness, and
'Where,'

Ask'd Walter, patting Lilia's head—she lay
Beside him—'lives there such a woman now?'

Quick answer'd Lilia: 'There are thousands
now

Such women; but convention beats them down;
It is but bringing up; no more than that.
You men have done it—how I hate you all!
Ah, were I something great! I wish I were
Some mighty poetess, I would shame
you then,

That love to keep us children. O, I wish
That I were some great princess, I would build
Far off from men a college like a man's,
And I would teach them all that men are
taught;

We are twice as quick!' And here she shook
aside

The hand that play'd the patron with her
curls.

And one said smiling: 'Pretty were the
sight

If our old halls could change their sex, and
flaunt

With prudes for proctors, dowagers for deans,
And sweet girl-graduates in their golden hair.
I think they should not wear our rusty gowns,
But move as rich as Emperor-moths, or Ralph
Who shines so in the corner; yet I fear,
If there were many Lilies in the brood,
However deep you might embower the nest,
Some boy would spy it.'

At this upon the sword
She tapt her tiny silken-sandall'd foot:
'That's your light way; but I would make it
death

For any male thing but to peep at us.'

Petulant she spoke, and at herself she
laugh'd;

A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,
And sweet as English air could make her, she!
But Walter hail'd a score of names upon her,
And 'petty Ogress,' and 'ungrateful Puss,'
And swore he long'd at college, only long'd,
All else was well, for she-society.

They boated and they cricketed; they talk'd
At wine, in clubs, of art, of politics;
They lost their weeks; they vex'd the souls of
deans;

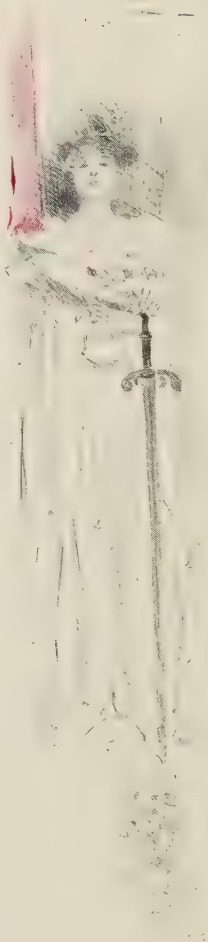
They rode; they betted; made a hundred
friends,

And caught the blossom of the flying terms,
But miss'd the mignonette of Vivian-place,
The little hearth-flower Lilia. Thus he spoke,
Part banter, part affection.

'True,' she said,
'We doubt not that. O, yes, you miss'd us
much!

I'll stake my ruby ring upon it you did.'

She held it out; and as a parrot turns
Up thro' gilt wires a crafty loving eye,
And takes a lady's finger with all care,



THE PRINCESS

And bites it for true heart and not for harm,
So he with Lilia's. Daintily she shriek'd
And wrung it. 'Doubt my word again!' he
said.

'Come, listen! here is proof that you were
miss'd:

We seven stay'd at Christmas up to read;
And there we took one tutor as to read.
The hard-grain'd Muses of the cube and
square

Were out of season; never man, I think,
So moulder'd in a sinecure as he;
For while our cloisters echo'd frosty feet,
And our long walks were stript as bare as
brooms,

We did but talk you over, pledge you all
In wassail; often, like as many girls—
Sick for the hollies and the yews of home—
As many little trifling Lilies—play'd
Charades and riddles as at Christmas here,
And *what's my thought* and *when and where*
and how,

And often told a tale from mouth to mouth
As here at Christmas.'

She remember'd that;

A pleasant game, she thought. She liked it
more

Than magic music, forfeits, all the rest.
But these—what kind of tales did men tell
men,

She wonder'd, by themselves?

A half disdain

Perch'd on the pouted blossom of her lips;
And Walter nodded at me: '*He* began,
The rest would follow, each in turn; and so
We forged a sevenfold story. Kind? what
kind?

Chimeras, crotchets, Christmas solecisms;
Seven-headed monsters only made to kill
Time by the fire in winter.'

'Kill him now,

The tyrant! Kill him in the summer too,'
Said Lilia; 'Why not now?' the maiden aunt.
'Why not a summer's as a winter's tale?

A tale for summer as befits the time,
And something it should be to suit the place,
Heroic, for a hero lies beneath,
Grave, solemn!'

Walter warp'd his mouth at this
To something so mock-solemn, that I laugh'd,
And Lilia woke with sudden-shrilling mirth
An echo like a ghostly woodpecker
Hid in the ruins; till the maiden aunt—
A little sense of wrong had touch'd
her face

With color—turn'd to me with 'As you will;
Heroic if you will, or what you will,
Or be yourself your hero if you will.'

'Take Lilia, then, for heroine,' clamor'd he,
'And make her some great princess, six feet
high,

Grand, epic, homicidal; and be you
The prince to win her!'

'Then follow me, the prince,'
I answered, 'each be hero in his turn!'

Seven and yet one, like shadows in a dream.—
Heroic seems our princess as required—
But something made to suit with time and
place,

A Gothic ruin and a Grecian house,
A talk of college and of ladies' rights,
A feudal knight in silken masquerade,
And, yonder, shrieks and strange experiments
For which the good Sir Ralph had burnt them
all—

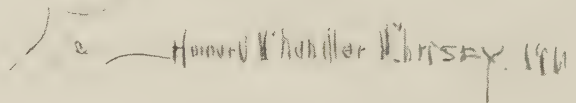
This *were* a medley! we should have him back
Who told the "Winter's Tale" to do it for us.
No matter; we will say whatever comes.
And let the ladies sing us, if they will,
From time to time, some ballad or a song
To give us breathing-space.'

So I began,

And the rest follow'd; and the women sang
Between the rougher voices of the men,
Like linnets in the pauses of the wind:
And here I give the story and the songs.



PART ONE





PART ONE

A PRINCE I was, blue-eyed, and fair in face,
Of temper amorous as the first of May,
With lengths of yellow ringlet, like a girl,
For on my cradle shone the Northern star.

There lived an ancient legend in our house.
Some sorcerer, whom a far-off grandsire burnt
Because he cast no shadow, had foretold,
Dying, that none of all our blood should know
The shadow from the substance, and that one
Should come to fight with shadows and to
fall;

For so, my mother said, the story ran.
And, truly, waking dreams were, more or less,
An old and strange affection of the house.
Myself too had weird seizures, Heaven knows
what!

On a sudden in the midst of men and day,
And while I walk'd and talk'd as heretofore,
I seem'd to move among a world of ghosts,
And feel myself the shadow of a dream.
Our great court-Galen poised his gilt-head
cane,

And paw'd his beard, and mutter'd 'catalepsy.'
My mother pitying made a thousand prayers.
My mother was as mild as any saint,
Half-canonized by all that look'd on her,
So gracious was her tact and tenderness;
But my good father thought a king a
king.

He cared not for the affection of the house;
He held his sceptre like a pendant's wand
To lash offence, and with long arms and hands
Reach'd out and pick'd offenders from the
mass

For judgment.

Now it chanced that I had been,
While life was yet in bud and blade, betroth'd
To one, a neighboring Princess. She to me
Was proxy-wedded with a bootless calf
At eight years old; and still from time to time
Came murmurs of her beauty from the South,
And of her brethren, youths of puissance;
And still I wore her picture by my heart,
And one dark tress; and all around them
both

THE PRINCESS

Sweet thoughts would swarm as bees about
their queen.

But when the days drew nigh that I should
wed,
My father sent ambassadors with furs
And jewels, gifts, to fetch her. These brought
back
A present, a great labor of the loom;
And therewithal an answer vague as wind.
Besides, they saw the king; he took the gifts;
He said there was a compact; that was true;
But then she had a will; was he to blame?
And maiden fancies; loved to live alone
Among her women; certain, would not wed.

That morning in the presence room I stood
With Cyril and with Florian, my two friends:
The first a gentleman of broken means—
His father's fault—but given to starts and
bursts
Of revel; and the last, my other heart,
And almost my half-self, for still we moved
Together, twinn'd as horse's ear and eye.

Now, while they spake, I saw my father's
face
Grow long and troubled like a rising moon,
Inflamed with wrath. He started on his feet,
Tore the king's letter, snow'd it down, and
rent
The wonder of the loom thro' warp and woof
From skirt to skirt; and at the last he sware
That he would send a hundred thousand men,
And bring her in a whirlwind; then he chew'd
The thrice-turn'd cud of wrath, and cook'd
his spleen,
Communing with his captains of the war.

At last I spoke: 'My father, let me go.
It cannot be but some gross error lies
In this report, this answer of a king
Whom all men rate as kind and hospitable;
Or, maybe, I myself, my bride once seen,

Whate'er my grief to find her less than fame,
May rue the bargain made.' And Florian
said:

'I have a sister at the foreign court,
Who moves about the Princess; she, you
know,
Who wedded with a nobleman from thence.
He, dying lately, left her, as I hear,
The lady of three castles in that land;
Thro' her this matter might be sifted clean.'
And Cyril, whisper'd: 'Take me with you too.'
Then laughing, 'What if these weird seizures
come
Upon you in those lands, and no one near
To point you out the shadow from the truth!
Take me; I'll serve you better in a strait;
I grate on rusty hinges here.' But 'No!
Roar'd the rough king, 'you shall not; we
ourselves
Will crush her pretty maiden fancies dead
In iron gauntlets; break the council up.'

But when the council broke, I rose and past
Thro' the wild woods that hung about the
town;
Found a still place, and pluck'd her likeness
out;
Laid it on flowers, and watch'd it lying
bathed
In the green gleam of dewy-tassell'd trees.
What were those fancies? wherefore break her
troth?
Proud look'd the lips; but while I meditated
A wind arose and rush'd upon the South,
And shook the songs, the whispers, and the
shrieks
Of the wild woods together, and a Voice
Went with it, 'Follow, follow, thou shalt win.'

Then, ere the silver sickle of that month
Became her golden shield, I stole from court
With Cyril and with Florian, unperceived,
Cat-footed thro' the town and half in dread
To hear my father's clamor at our backs





Howard Chandler Christy, 1911

A MEDLEY

With 'Ho!' from some bay-window shake the
night;

But all was quiet. From the bastion'd walls
Like threaded spiders, one by one, we dropt,
And flying reach'd the frontier; then we crost
To a livelier land; and so by tilth and grange,
And vines, and blowing bosks of wilderness,
We gain'd the mother-city thick with towers,
And in the imperial palace found the king.

His name was Gama; crack'd and small his
voice,

But bland the smile that like a wrinkling wind
On glassy water drove his cheek in lines;
A little dry old man, without a star,
Not like a king. Three days he feasted us,
And on the fourth I spake of why we came,
And my betroth'd. 'You do us, Prince,' he
said,

Airing a snowy hand and signet gem,
'All honor. We remember love ourself
In our sweet youth. There did a compact
pass

Long summers back, a kind of ceremony—
I think the year in which our olives fail'd.
I would you had her, Prince, with all my
heart,

With my full heart; but there were widows
here,

Two widows, Lady Psyche, Lady Blanche;
They fed her theories, in and out of place
Maintaining that with equal husbandry
The woman were an equal to the man.

They harp'd on this; with this our banquets
rang;

Our dances broke and buzz'd in knots of talk;
Nothing but this; my very ears were hot
To hear them. Knowledge, so my daughter
held,

Was all in all; they had but been, she thought,
As children; they must lose the child, assume
The woman. Then, sir, awful odes she wrote,
Too awful, sure, for what they treated of,
But all she is and does is awful; odes

About this losing of the child; and rhymes
And dismal lyrics, prophesying change
Beyond all reason. These the women sang;
And they that know such things—I sought
but peace;

No critic I—would call them masterpieces.
They master'd *me*. At last she begg'd a boon,
A certain summer-palace which I have
Hard by your father's frontier. I said no,
Yet being an easy man, gave it; and there,
All wild to found an University
For maidens, on the spur she fled; and more
We know not,—only this: they see no men,
Not even her brother Arac, nor the twins
Her brethren, tho' they love her, look upon
her

As on a kind of paragon; and I—
Pardon me saying it—were much loth to breed
Dispute betwixt myself and mine; but since—
And I confess with right—you think me bound
In some sort, I can give you letters to her;
And yet, to speak the truth, I rate your
chance

Almost at naked nothing.'

Thus the king;

And I, tho' nettled that he seem'd to slur
With garrulous ease and oily courtesies
Our formal compact, yet, not less—all frets
But chafing me on fire to find my bride—
Went forth again with both my friends.

We rode

Many a long league back to the North.

At last

From hills that look'd across a land of hope
We dropt with evening on a rustic town
Set in a gleaming river's crescent-curve,
Close at the boundary of the liberties;
There, enter'd an old hostel, call'd mine host
To council, plied him with his richest wines,
And show'd the late-writ letters of the king.

He with a long low sibilation, stared
As blank as death in marble; then exclaim'd,
Averring it was clear against all rules



THE PRINCESS



For any man to go; but as his brain
Began to mellow, 'If the king,' he said,
'Had given us letters, was he bound to speak?
The king would bear him out;' and at the
last—

The summer of the vine in all his veins—
'No doubt that we might make it worth his
while.

She once had past that way; he heard her
speak;

She scared him; life! he never saw the like;
She look'd as grand as doomsday and as
grave!

And he, he revered his liege-lady there;
He always made a point to post with mares;
His daughter and his housemaid were the
boys;

The land, he understood, for miles about
Was till'd by women; all the swine were sows,
And all the dogs'—

But while he jested thus,
A thought flash'd thro' me which I clothed in
act,

Remembering how we three presented Maid,
Or Nymph, or Goddess, at high tide of feast,
In masque or pageant at my father's court.
We sent mine host to purchase female gear;
He brought it, and himself, a sight to shake
The midriff of despair with laughter, help
To lace us up, till each in maiden plumes
We rustled; him we gave a costly bribe
To guerdon silence, mounted our good steeds,
And boldly ventured on the liberties.

We follow'd up the river as we rode,
And rode till midnight, when the college lights
Began to glisten firefly-like in copse
And linden alley; then we past an arch,
Whereon a woman-statue rose with wings
From four-wing'd horses dark against the
stars,

And some inscription ran along the front,
But deep in shadow. Further on we gain'd
A little street half garden and half house,

But scarce could hear each other speak for
noise

Of clocks and chimes, like silver hammers
falling

On silver anvils, and the splash and stir
Of fountains spouted up and showering down
In meshes of the jasmine and the rose;
And all about us peal'd the nightingale,
Rapt in her song and careless of the snare.

There stood a bust of Pallas for a sign,
By two sphere lamps blazon'd like Heaven and
Earth

With constellation and with continent,
Above an entry. Riding in, we call'd;
A plump-arm'd ostleress and a stable wench
Came running at the call, and help'd us down.
Then stopt a buxom hostess forth, and sail'd,
Full-blown, before us into rooms which gave
Upon a pillar'd porch, the bases lost
In laurel. Her we ask'd of that and this,
And who were tutors. 'Lady Blanche,' she
said,

'And Lady Psyche.' 'Which was prettiest,
Best natured?' 'Lady Psyche.' 'Hers are
we,'

One voice, we cried; and I sat down and wrote
In such a hand as when a field of corn
Bows all its ears before the roaring East:

'Three ladies of the Northern empire pray
Your Highness would enroll them with your
own,
As Lady Psyche's pupils.'

This I seal'd;
The seal was Cupid bent above a scroll,
And o'er his head Uranian Venus hung,
And raised the blinding bandage from his
eyes.

I gave the letter to be sent with dawn;
And then to bed, where half in doze I seem'd
To float about a glimmering night, and watch
A full sea glazed with muffled moonlight swell
On some dark shore just seen that it was rich.

S O N G

As thro' the land at eve we went,
And pluck'd the ripen'd ears,

As thro' the land at eve we went,
And pluck'd the ripen'd ears,
We fell out, my wife and I,
O, we fell out, I know not why,
And kiss'd again with tears.
And blessings on the falling out
That all the more endears,
When we fall out with those we love
And kiss again with tears!
For when we came where lies the child
We lost in other years,
There above the little grave,
O, there above the little grave,
We kiss'd again with tears.



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PART TWO



THE PRINCESS



Will rank you nobly, mingled up with me.
What! are the ladies of your land so tall?"
'We of the court,' said Cyril. 'From the
court,'

She answer'd, 'then ye know the Prince?' and
he:

'The climax of his age! as tho' there were
One rose in all the world, your Highness that,
He worships your ideal.' She replied:

'We scarcely thought in our own hall to hear
This barren verbiage, current among men,
Light coin, the tinsel clink of compliment.
Your flight from out your bookless wilds
would seem

As arguing love of knowledge and of power;
Your language proves you still the child.

Indeed,

We dream not of him; when we set our hand
To this great work, we purposed with ourself
Never to wed. You likewise will do well,
Ladies, in entering here, to cast and fling
The tricks which make us toys of men, that so
Some future time, if so indeed you will,
You may with those self-styled our lords ally
Your fortunes, justlier balanced, scale with
scale.'

At those high words, we, conscious of our-
selves,

Perused the matting; then an officer
Rose up, and read the statutes, such as these:
Not for three years to correspond with home;
Not for three years to cross the liberties;
Not for three years to speak with any men;
And many more, which hastily subscribed,
We enter'd on the boards. And 'Now,' she
cried,

'Ye are green wood, see ye warp not. Look,
our hall!

Our statues!—not of those that men desire,
Sleek Odalisques, or oracles of mode,
Nor stunted squaws of West or East; but she
That taught the Sabine how to rule, and she
The foundress of the Babylonian wall,

The Carian Artemisia strong in war,
The Rhodope that built the pyramid,
Clelia, Cornelia, with the Palmyrene
That fought Aurelian, and the Roman brows
Of Agrippina. Dwell with these, and lose
Convention, since to look on noble forms
Makes noble thro' the sensuous organism
That which is higher. O, lift your natures up;
Embrace our aims; work out your freedom.

Girls,

Knowledge is now no more a fountain seal'd!
Drink deep, until the habits of the slave,
The sins of emptiness, gossip and spite,
And slander, die. Better not be at all
Than not be noble. Leave us; you may go.
To-day the Lady Psyche will harangue
The fresh arrivals of the week before;
For they press in from all the provinces,
And fill the hive.'

She spoke, and bowing waved
Dismissal; back again we crost the court
To Lady Psyche's. As we enter'd in,
There sat along the forms, like morning doves
That sun their milky bosoms on the thatch,
A patient range of pupils; she herself
Erect behind a desk of satin-wood,
A quick brunette, well-moulded, falcon-eyed,
And on the hither side, or so she look'd,
Of twenty summers. At her left a child,
In shining draperies, headed like a star,
Her maiden babe, a double April old,
Aglaïa slept. We sat; the lady glanced;
Then Florian, but no livelier than the dame
That whisper'd 'Asses' ears' among the sedge,
'My sister.' 'Comely, too, by all that's fair,'
Said Cyril. 'O, hush, hush!' and she began.

'This world was once a fluid haze of light,
Till toward the centre set the starry tides,
And eddied into suns, that wheeling cast
The planets; then the monster, then the man;
Tattoo'd or woaded, winter-clad in skins,
Raw from the prime, and crushing down his
mate,

A MEDLEY

As yet we find in barbarous isles, and here
Among the lowest.'

Thereupon she took
A bird's-eye view of all the ungracious past;
Glanced at the legendary Amazon
As emblematic of a nobler age;
Appraised the Lycian custom, spoke of those
That lay at wine with Lar and Lucumo;
Ran down the Persian, Grecian, Roman lines
Of empire, and the woman's state in each,
How far from just; till warming with her
theme

She fulminated out her scorn of laws Salique
And little-footed China, touch'd on Mahomet
With much contempt, and came to chivalry,
When some respect, however slight, was paid
To woman, superstition all awry.
However, then commenced the dawn; a beam
Had slanted forward, falling in a land
Of promise; fruit would follow. Deep, indeed,
Their debt of thanks to her who first had
dared

To leap the rotten pales of prejudice,
Disyoke their necks from custom, and assert
None lordlier than themselves but that which
made

Woman and man. She had founded; they
must build.

Here might they learn whatever men were
taught.

Let them not fear, some said their heads were
less;

Some men's were small, not they the least of
men;

For often fineness compensated size.

Besides the brain was like the hand, and grew
With using; thence the man's, if more was
more.

He took advantage of his strength to be
First in the field; some ages had been lost;
But woman ripen'd earlier, and her life
Was longer; and albeit their glorious names
Were fewer, scatter'd stars, yet since in truth
The highest is the measure of the man,

And not the Kaffir, Hottentot, Malay,
Nor those horn-handed breakers of the glebe,
But Homer, Plato, Verulam, even so
With woman; and in arts of government
Elizabeth and others, arts of war
The peasant Joan and others, arts of grace
Sappho and others vied with any man;
And, last not least, she who had left her place,
And bow'd her state to them, that they might
grow

To use and power on this oasis, lapt
In the arms of leisure, sacred from the blight
Of ancient influence and scorn.

At last

She rose upon a wind of prophecy
Dilating on the future: 'everywhere
Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,
Two in the tangled business of the world,
Two in the liberal offices of life,
Two plummetts dropt from one to sound the
abyss

Of science and the secrets of the mind;
Musician, painter, sculptor, critic, more;
And everywhere the broad and bounteous
Earth

Should bear a double growth of those rare
souls,

Poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood of the
world.'

She ended here, and beckon'd us; the rest
Parted; and, glowing full-faced welcome, she
Began to address us, and was moving on
In gratulation, till as when a boat
Tacks and the slacken'd sail flaps, all her voice
Faltering and fluttering in her throat, she
cried,

'My brother!' 'Well, my sister.' 'O,' she
said,

'What do you here? and in this dress? and
these?

Why, who are these? a wolf within the fold!
A pack of wolves! the Lord be gracious to
me!







THE PRINCESS

A plot, a plot, a plot, to ruin all!

'No plot, no plot,' he answered. 'Wretched boy,

How saw you not the inscription on the gate,
LET NO MAN ENTER IN ON PAIN OF DEATH?'

'And if I had,' he answer'd, 'Who could think
The softer Adams of your Academe,

O sister, Sirens tho' they be, were such
As chanted on the blanching bones of men?'

'But you will find it otherwise,' she said.

'You jest; ill jesting with edge-tools! my vow
Binds me to speak, and O that iron will,
That axelike edge unturnable, our Head,
The Princess!' 'Well then, Psyche, take my
life.

And nail me like a weasel on a grange
For warning; bury me beside the gate,
And cut this epitaph above my bones:

*Here lies a brother by a sister slain,
All for the common good of womankind.'*

'Let me die too,' said Cyril, 'having seen
And heard the Lady Psyche.'

I struck in:

'Albeit so mask'd, madam, I love the truth;
Receive it, and in me behold the Prince
Your countryman, affianced years ago
To the Lady Ida. Here, for here she was,
And thus—what other way was left?—I
came.'

'O sir, O Prince, I have no country, none;
If any, this; but none. Whate'er I was
Disrooted, what I am is grafted here.
Affianced, sir? love-whispers may not breathe
Within this vestal limit, and how should I,
Who am not mine, say, live? The thunderbolt
Hangs silent; but prepare. I speak, it falls.'
'Yet pause,' I said: 'for that inscription there,
I think no more of deadly lurks therein,
Than in a clapper clapping in a garth,
To scare the fowl from fruit; if more there
be,

If more and acted on, what follows? war;
Your own work marr'd; for this your
Academe,

Whichever side be victor, in the halloo
Will topple to the trumpet down, and pass
With all fair theories only made to gild
A stormless summer.' 'Let the Princess judge
Of that,' she said: 'farewell, sir—and to you.

I shudder at the sequel, but I go.'

'Are you that Lady Psyche,' I rejoined,
'The fifth in line from that old Florian,
Yet hangs his portrait in my father's hall—
The gaunt old baron with his beetle brow
Sun-shaded in the heat of dusty fights—
As he bestrode my grandsire, when he fell,
And all else fled? we point to it, and we say,
The loyal warmth of Florian is not cold,
But branches current yet in kindred veins.'
'Are you that Psyche,' Florian added; 'she
With whom I sang about the morning hills,
Flung ball, flew kite, and raced the purple fly,
And-snared the squirrel of the glen? are you
That Psyche, wont to bind my throbbing
brow,

To smooth my pillow, mix the foaming
draught
Of fever, tell me pleasant tales, and read
My sickness down to happy dreams? are you
That brother-sister Psyche, both in one?
You were that Psyche, but what are
you now?'

'You are that Psyche,' Cyril said, 'for whom
I would be that forever which I seem,
Woman, if I might sit beside your feet,
And glean your scatter'd sapience.'

Then once more,

'Are you that Lady Psyche,' I began,
'That on her bridal morn before she past
From all her old companions, when the king
Kiss'd her pale cheek, declared that ancient
ties

Would still be dear beyond the southern hills;
That were there any of our people there
In want or peril, there was one to hear
And help them? look! for such are these and
I.'



A MEDLEY

'Are you that Psyche,' Florian ask'd, 'to whom,

In gentler days, your arrow-wounded fawn
Came flying while you sat beside the well?
The creature laid his muzzle on your lap
And sobb'd, and you sobb'd with it, and the blood

Was sprinkled on your kirtle, and you wept.
That was fawn's blood, not brother's, yet you wept.

O, by the bright head of my little niece,
You were that Psyche, and what are you now?'

'You were that Psyche,' Cyril said again,
'The mother of the sweetest little maid
That ever crow'd for kisses.'

'Out upon it!'

She answer'd, 'peace! and why should I not play

The Spartan Mother with emotion, be
The Lucius Junius Brutus of my kind?
Him you call great; he for the common weal,
The fading politics of mortal Rome,
As I might slay this child, if good need were,

Slew both his sons; and I, shall I, on whom
The secular emancipation turns
Of half this world, be swerved from right to save

A prince, a brother? a little will I yield.
Best so, perchance, for us, and well for you.
O, hard when love and duty clash! I fear
My conscience will not count me fleckless;
yet—

Hear my conditions: promise—otherwise
You perish—as you came, to slip away
To-day, to-morrow, soon. It shall be said,
These women were too barbarous, would not learn;
They fled, who might have shamed us.
Promise, all.'

What could we else, we promised each; and she,

Like some wild creature newly-caged, commenced

A to-and-fro, so pacing till she paused
By Florian; holding out her lily arms
Took both his hands, and smiling faintly said:

'I knew you at the first; tho' you have grown
You scarce have alter'd. I am sad and glad
To see you, Florian. I give thee to death,
My brother! it was duty spoke, not I.
My needful seeming harshness, pardon it.
Our mother, is she well?'

With that she kiss'd

His forehead, then, a moment after, clung
About him, and betwixt them blossom'd up
From out a common vein of memory
Sweet household talk, and phrases of the hearth,

And far allusion, till the gracious dew
Began to glisten and to fall; and while
They stood, so rapt, we gazing, came a voice,
'I brought a message here from Lady Blanche.'

Back started she, and turning round we saw
The Lady Blanche's daughter where she stood,
Melissa, with her hand upon the lock,
A rosy blonde, and in a college gown,
That clad her like an April daffodilly—
Her mother's color—with her lips apart,
And all her thoughts as fair within her eyes,
As bottom agates seen to wave and float
In crystal currents of clear morning seas.

So stood that same fair creature at the door.

Then Lady Psyche, 'Ah—Melissa—you!
You heard us?' and Melissa, 'O, pardon me!
I heard, I could not help it, did not wish;
But, dearest lady, pray you fear me not,
Nor think I bear that heart within my breast,
To give three gallant gentlemen to death.'
'I trust you,' said the other, 'for we two
Were always friends, none closer, elm and vine;



THE PRINCESS



But yet your mother's jealous temperament—
Let not your prudence, dearest, drowse, or
prove

The Danaïd of a leaky vase, for fear
This whole foundation ruin, and I lose
My honor, these their lives.' 'Ah, fear me
not,'

Replied Melissa; 'no—I would not tell,
No, not for all Aspasia's cleverness,
No, not to answer, madam, all those hard
things

That Sheba came to ask of Solomon.'
'Be it so,' the other, 'that we still may lead
The new light up, and culminate in peace,
For Solomon may come to Sheba yet.'
Said Cyril, 'Madam, he the wisest man
Feasted the woman wisest then, in halls
Of Lebanonian cedar; nor should you—
Tho', madam, *you* should answer, *we* would
ask—

Less welcome find among us, if you came
Among us, debtors for our lives to you,
Myself for something more.' He said not
what,

But 'Thanks,' she answer'd, 'go; we have
been too long

Together; keep your hoods about the face;
They do so that affect abstraction here.
Speak little; mix not with the rest; and hold
Your promise. All, I trust, may yet be well.'

We turn'd to go, but Cyril took the child,
And held her round the knees against his
waist,

And blew the swollen cheek of a trumpeter,
While Psyche watch'd them, smiling, and the
child

Push'd her flat hand against his face and
laugh'd;

And thus our conference closed.

And then we strolled
For half the day thro' stately theatres
Bench'd crescent-wise. In each we sat, we
heard

The grave professor. On the lecture slate
The circle rounded under female hands
With flawless demonstration; follow'd then
A classic lecture, rich in sentiment,
With scraps of thunderous epic lilted out
By violet-hooded Doctors, elegies
And quoted odes, and jewels five-words-long
That on the stretch'd forefinger of all Time
Sparkle forever. Then we dipt in all
That treats of whatsoever is, the state,
The total chronicles of man, the mind,
The morals, something of the frame, the rock,
The star, the bird, the fish, the shell, the
flower,

Electric, chemic laws, and all the rest,
And whatsoever can be taught and known;
Till like three horses that have broken fence,
And glutt'd all night long breast-deep in
corn,

We issued gorged with knowledge, and I
spoke:

'Why, sirs, they do all this as well as we.'
'They hunt old trails,' said Cyril, 'very well;
But when did woman ever yet invent?'

'Ungracious!' answer'd Florian; 'have you
learnt

No more from Psyche's lecture, you that
talk'd

The trash that made me sick, and almost sad?'

'O, trash,' he said, 'but with a kernel in it!

Should I not call her wise who made me
wise?

And learnt? I learnt more from her in a
flash

Than if my brainpan were an empty hull,
And every Muse tumbled a science in.
A thousand hearts lie fallow in these halls,
And round these halls a thousand baby loves
Fly twanging headless arrows at the hearts,
Whence follows many a vacant pang;
but O,

With me, sir, enter'd in the bigger boy,
The head of all the golden-shafted firm,
The long-limb'd lad that had a Psyche too;

A MEDLEY

He cleft me thro' the stomacher. And now
What think you of it, Florian? do I chase
The substance or the shadow? will it hold?
I have no sorcerer's malison on me,
No ghostly hauntings like his Highness. I
Flatter myself that always everywhere
I know the substance when I see it. Well,
Are castles shadows? Three of them?
Is she

The sweet proprietress a shadow? If not,
Shall those three castles patch my tatter'd
coat?

For dear are those three castles to my wants,
And dear is sister Psyche to my heart,
And two dear things are one of double worth;
And much I might have said, but that my
zone

Unmann'd me. Then the Doctors! O, to hear
The Doctors! O, to watch the thirsty plants
Imbibing! once or twice I thought to roar,
To break my chain, to shake my mane; but
thou,

Modulate me, soul of mincing mimicry!
Make liquid treble of that bassoon, my throat;
Abase those eyes that ever loved to meet
Star-sisters answering under crescent brows;
Abate the stride which speaks of man, and
loose

A flying charm of blushes o'er this cheek,
Where they like swallows coming out of time
Will wonder why they came. But hark the
bell
For dinner, let us go!

And in we stream'd
Among the columns, pacing staid and still
By twos and threes, till all from end to end
With beauties every shade of brown and fair
In colors gayer than the morning mist,
The long hall glitter'd like a bed of flowers.
How might a man not wander from his wits
Pierced thro' with eyes, but that I kept mine
own

Intent on her, who rapt in glorious dreams,
The second-sight of some Astræan age,

Sat compass'd with professors; they, the
while,

Discuss'd a doubt and tost it to and fro.
A clamor thicken'd, mixt with inmost terms
Of art and science; Lady Blanche alone
Of faded form and haughtiest lineaments,
With all her autumn tresses falsely brown,
Shot sidelong daggers at us, a tiger-cat
In act to spring.

At last a solemn grace
Concluded, and we sought the gardens. There
One walk'd reciting by herself, and one
In this hand held a volume as to read,
And smoothed a petted peacock down with
that.

Some to a low song oar'd a shallop by,
Or under arches of the marble bridge
Hung, shadow'd from the heat; some hid and
sought

In the orange thickets; others tost a ball
Above the fountain-jets, and back again
With laughter; others lay about the lawns,
Of the older sort, and murmur'd that their
May

Was passing—what was learning unto them?
They wish'd to marry; they could rule a
house;

Men hated learned women. But we three
Sat muffled like the Fates; and often came
Melissa hitting all we saw with shafts
Of gentle satire, kin to charity,
That harm'd not. Then day droopt; the
chapel bells

Call'd us; we left the walks; we mixt with
those

Six hundred maidens clad in purest white,
Before two streams of light from wall to wall,
While the great organ almost burst his pipes,
Groaning for power, and rolling thro' the
court

A long melodious thunder to the sound
Of solemn psalms and silver litanies,
The work of Ida, to call down from heaven
A blessing on her labors for the world.





— How, I wonder, say you —

S O N G

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
 Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
 Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
 Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one
 sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
 Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
 Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
 Under the silver moon;
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one,
 sleep.



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PART THREE





PART THREE

MORN in the white wake of the morning star
 Came furrowing all the orient into gold.
 We rose, and each by other drest with care
 Descended to the court that lay three parts
 In shadow, but the Muses' heads were touch'd
 Above the darkness from their native East.

There while we stood beside the fount, and
 watch'd
 Or seem'd to watch the dancing bubble, ap-
 proach'd
 Melissa, tinged with wan from lack of sleep,
 Or grief, and glowing round her dewy eyes
 The circled Iris of a night of tears;
 And 'Fly,' she cried, 'O fly, while yet you
 may!
 My mother knows.' And when I ask'd her
 'how,'
 'My fault,' she wept, 'my fault! and yet not
 mine;

Yet mine in part. O, hear me, pardon me!
 My mother, 't is her wont from night to night
 To rail at Lady Psyche and her side.
 She says the Princess should have been the
 Head,
 Herself and Lady Psyche the two arms,
 And so it was agreed when first they came;
 But Lady Psyche was the right hand now,
 And she the left, or not or seldom used;
 Hers more than half the students, all the love.
 And so last night she fell to canvass you,
Her countrywomen! she did not envy her.
 "Who ever saw such wild barbarians?
 Girls?—more like men!" and at these words
 the snake,
 My secret, seem'd to stir within my breast;
 And O, sirs, could I help it, but my cheek
 Began to burn and burn, and her lynx eye
 To fix and make me hotter, till she laugh'd:
 "O marvellously modest maiden, you!

THE PRINCESS



Men! girls, like men! why, if they had been
men

You need not set your thoughts in rubric thus
For wholesale comment." Pardon, I am
shamed

That I must needs repeat for my excuse
What looks so little graceful: "men"—for
still

My mother went revolving on the word—
"And so they are,—very like men indeed—
And with that woman closeted for hours!"
Then came these dreadful words out one by
one,

"Why — these — *are* — men;" I shudder'd;
"and you know it."

"O, ask me nothing," I said. "And she knows
too,

And she conceals it." So my mother clutch'd
The truth at once, but with no word from me;
And now thus early risen she goes to inform
The Princess. Lady Psyche will be crush'd;
But you may yet be saved, and therefore fly;
But heal me with your pardon ere you go.'

'What pardon, sweet Melissa, for a blush?'
Said Cyril; 'Pale one, blush again; than wear
Those lilies, better blush our lives away.
Yet let us breathe for one hour more in
heaven,'

He added, 'lest some classic angel speak
In scorn of us, "They mounted, Ganymedes,
To tumble, Vulcans, on the second morn."
But I will melt this marble into wax
To yield us farther furlough;' and he went.

Melissa shook her doubtful curls, and
thought
He scarce would prosper. 'Tell us,' Florian
ask'd,
'How grew this feud betwixt the right and
left.'

'O, long ago,' she said, 'betwixt these two
Division smoulders hidden; 't is my mother,
Too jealous, often fretful as the wind

Pent in a crevice: much I bear with her.
I never knew my father, but she says—
God help her!—she was wedded to a fool;
And still she rail'd against the state of things.
She had the care of Lady Ida's youth,
And from the Queen's decease she brought her
up.

But when your sister came she won the heart
Of Ida; they were still together, grew—
For so they said themselves—inoculated;
Consonant chords that shiver to one note;
One mind in all things. Yet my mother still
Affirms your Psyche thieved her theories,
And angled with them for her pupil's love;
She calls her plagiarist, I know not what.
But I must go; I dare not tarry,' and light,
As flies the shadow of a bird, she fled.

Then murmur'd Florian, gazing after her:
'An open-hearted maiden, true and pure.
If I could love, why this were she. How pretty
Her blushing was, and how she blush'd
again,

As if to close with Cyril's random wish!
Not like your Princess cramm'd with erring
pride,
Nor like poor Psyche whom she drags in tow.'

'The crane,' I said, 'may chatter of the
crane,
The dove may murmur of the dove, but I
An eagle clang an eagle to the sphere.
My princess, O my princess! true she errs,
But in her own grand way; being herself
Three times more noble than three score of
men,

She sees herself in every woman else,
And so she wears her error like a crown
To blind the truth and me. For her, and her,
Hebes are they to hand ambrosia, mix
The nectar; but—ah, she—whene'er she
moves

The Samian Herè rises, and she speaks
A Memmon smitten with the morning sun.'

A MEDLEY

So saying from the court we paced, and
gain'd

The terrace ranged along the northern front,
And leaning there on those balusters, high
Above the empurpled champaign, drank the
gale

That blown about the foliage underneath,
And sated with the innumerable rose,
Beat balm upon our eyelids. Hither came
Cyril, and yawning, 'O hard task,' he cried:
'No fighting shadows here. I forced a way
Thro' solid opposition crabb'd and gnarl'd.
Better to clear prime forests, heave and thump
A league of street in summer solstice down,
Than hammer at this reverend gentlewoman.
I knock'd and, bidden, enter'd; found her
there

At point to move, and settled in her eyes
The green malignant light of coming storm.
Sir, I was courteous, every phrase well-oil'd,
As man's could be; yet maiden-meeek I pray'd
Concealment. She demanded who we were,
And why we came? I fabled nothing fair,
But, your example pilot, told her all.
Up went the hush'd amaze of hand and eye.
But when I dwelt upon your old affiance,
She answer'd sharply that I talk'd astray.
I urged the fierce inscription on the gate,
And our three lives. True—we had limed
ourselves

With open eyes, and we must take the chance.
But such extremes, I told her, well might harm
The woman's cause. "Not more than now,"
she said,

"So puddled as it is with favoritism."
I tried the mother's heart. Shame might be-
fall

Melissa, knowing, saying not she knew;
Her answer was, "Leave me to deal with that."
I spoke of war to come and many deaths,
And she replied, her duty was to speak,
And duty duty, clear of consequences.
I grew discouraged, sir; but since I knew
No rock so hard but that a little wave

May beat admission in a thousand years,
I recommenced: "Decide not ere you pause.
I find you here but in the second place,
Some say the third—the authentic foundress
you.

I offer boldly; we will seat you highest.
Wink at our advent; help my prince to gain
His rightful bride, and here I promise you
Some palace in our land, where you shall
reign

The head and heart of all our fair she-world,
And your great name flow on with broadening
time

For ever." Well, she balanced this a little,
And told me she would answer us to-day,
Meantime be mute; thus much, nor more I
gain'd.'

He ceasing, came a message from the Head.
'That afternoon the Princess rode to take
The dip of certain strata to the north.
Would we go with her? we should find the
land

Worth seeing, and the river made a fall
Out yonder;' then she pointed on to where
A double hill ran up his furrowy forks
Beyond the thick-leaved platans of the vale.

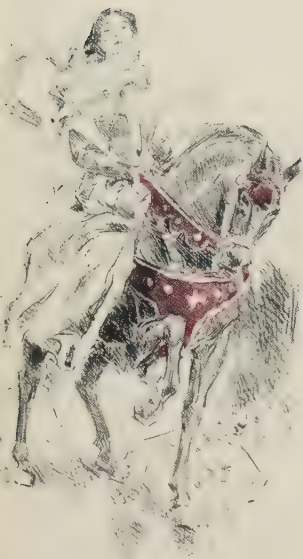
Agreed to, this, the day fled on thro' all
Its range of duties to the appointed hour.
Then summon'd to the porch we went. She
stood

Among her maidens, higher by the head,
Her back against a pillar, her foot on one
Of those tame leopards. Kitten-like he roll'd
And paw'd about her sandal. I drew near;
I gazed. On a sudden my strange seizure
came

Upon me, the weird vision of our house.
The Princess Ida seem'd a hollow show,
Her gay-furr'd cats a painted fantasy,
Her college and her maidens empty masks,
And I myself the shadow of a dream,
For all things were and were not. Yet I felt



THE PRINCESS



My heart beat thick with passion and with
awe;

Then from my breast the involuntary sigh
Brake, as she smote me with the light of eyes
That lent my knee desire to kneel, and shook
My pulses, till to horse we got, and so
Went forth in long retinue following up
The river as it narrow'd to the hills.

I rode beside her and to me she said:
'O friend, we trust that you esteem'd us not
Too harsh to your companion yesternorn;
Unwillingly we spake.' 'No—not to her,'
I answer'd, 'but to one of whom we spake
Your Highness might have seem'd the thing
you say.'

'Again?' she cried, 'are you ambassadresses
From him to me? we give you, being strange,
A license; speak, and let the topic die.'

I stammer'd that I knew him—could have
wish'd—
'Our king expects—was there no precontract?
There is no truer-hearted—ah, you seem
All he prefigured, and he could not see
The bird of passage flying south but long'd
To follow. Surely, if your Highness keep
Your purport, you will shock him even to
death,
Or baser courses, children of despair.'

'Poor boy,' she said, 'can he not read—no
books?
Quoit, tennis, ball—no games? nor deals in
that
Which men delight in, martial exercise?
To nurse a blind ideal like a girl;
Methinks he seems no better than a girl;
As girls were once, as we ourself have been.
We had our dreams; perhaps he mixt with
them.
We touch on our dead self, nor shun to do it,
Being other—since we learnt our meaning
here,

To lift the woman's fallen divinity
Upon an even pedestal with man.'

She paused, and added with a haughtier
smile,
'And as to precontracts, we move, my friend,
At no man's beck, but know ourself and thee,
O Vashti, noble Vashti! Summon'd out
She kept her state, and left the drunken king
To brawl at Shushan underneath the palms.'

'Alas, your Highness breathes full East,'
I said,
'On that which leans to you! I know the
Prince,
I prize his truth. And then how vast a work
To assail this gray preëminence of man!
You grant me license; might I use it? think;
Ere half be done perchance your life may fail;
Then comes the feebler heiress of your plan,
And takes and ruins all; and thus your pains
May only make that footprint upon sand
Which old-recurring waves of prejudice
Resmooth to nothing. Might I dread that
you,
With only Fame for spouse and your great
deeds
For issue, yet may live in vain, and miss
Meanwhile what every woman counts her due,
Love, children, happiness?'

And she exclaim'd,
'Peace, you young savage of the Northern
wild!
What! tho' your Prince's love were like a
god's,
Have we not made ourself the sacrifice?
You are bold indeed; we are not talk'd to thus.
Yet will we say for children, would they grew
Like field-flowers everywhere! we like them
well:
But children die; and let me tell you, girl,
How'er you babble, great deeds cannot die;
They with the sun and moon renew their light
For ever, blessing those that look on them.



A MEDLEY

Children—that men may pluck them from our
hearts,

Kill us with pity, break us with ourselves—

O—children—there is nothing upon earth

More miserable than she that has a son

And sees him err. Nor would we work for
fame;

Tho' she perhaps might reap the applause of
Great,

Who learns the one *POU STO* whence after-
hands

May move the world, tho' she herself effect

But little; wherefore up and act, nor shrink

For fear our solid aim be dissipated

By frail successors. Would, indeed, we had
been,

In lieu of many mortal flies, a race

Of giants living each a thousand years,

That we might see our own work out, and
watch

The sandy footprint harden into stone.'

I answer'd nothing, doubtful in myself

If that strange poet-princess with her grand

Imaginations might at all be won.

And she broke out interpreting my thoughts:

'No doubt we seem a kind of monster to
you;

We are used to that; for women, up
till this

Cramp'd under worse than South-sea-isle
taboo,

Dwarfs of the gynæceum, fail so far

In high desire, they know not, cannot guess

How much their welfare is a passion to us.

If we could give them surer, quicker proof—

O, if our end were less achievable

By slow approaches than by single act

Of immolation, any phase of death,

We were as prompt to spring against the
pikes,

Or down the fiery gulf as talk of it,

To compass our dear sisters' liberties.'

She bow'd as if to veil a noble tear;

And up we came to where the river sloped
To plunge in cataract, shattering on black
blocks

A breadth of thunder. O'er it shook the
woods,

And danced the color, and, below, stuck out
The bones of some vast bulk that lived and
roar'd

Before man was. She gazed awhile and said,

'As these rude bones to us, are we to her
That will be.' 'Dare we dream of that,' I
ask'd,

'Which wrought us, as the workman and his
work,

That practice betters?' 'How,' she cried,
'you love

The metaphysics! read and earn our prize,

A golden brooch. Beneath an emerald plane

Sits Diotima, teaching him that died

Of hemlock—our device, wrought to the life—

She rapt upon her subject, he on her;

For there are schools for all.' 'And yet,'

I said,

'Methinks I have not found among them all

One anatomic.' 'Nay, we thought of that,'

She answer'd, 'but it pleased us not; in truth

We shudder but to dream our maids should
ape

Those monstrous males that carve the living
hound,

And cram him with the fragments of the
grave,

Or in the dark dissolving human heart,

And holy secrets of this microcosm,

Dabbling a shameless hand with shameful
jest,

Encarnalize their spirits. Yet we know

Knowledge is knowledge, and this matter
hangs.

Howbeit ourself, foreseeing casualty,

Nor willing men should come among us,
learnt,

For many weary moons before we came,

THE PRINCESS

This craft of healing. Were you sick, our-
self

Would tend upon you. To your question now,
Which touches on the workman and his work.
Let there be light and there was light; 't is so,
For was, and is, and will be, are but is,
And all creation is one act at once,
The birth of light; but we that are not all,
As parts, can see but parts, now this, now
that,

And live, perforce, from thought to thought,
and make

One act a phantom of succession. Thus
Our weakness somehow shapes the shadow,
Time;

But in the shadow will we work, and mould
The woman to the fuller day.'

She spake

With kindled eyes: we rode a league beyond,
And, o'er a bridge of pinewood crossing, came
On flowery levels underneath the crag,
Full of all beauty. 'O, how sweet,' I said,—
For I was half-oblivious of my mask,—
'To linger here with one that loved us!' 'Yea,'
She answer'd, 'or with fair philosophies
That lift the fancy; for indeed these fields
Are lovely, lovelier not the Elysian lawns,
Where paced the demigods of old, and saw

The soft white vapor streak the crowned
towers

Built to the Sun.' Then, turning to her maids,
'Pitch our pavilion here upon the sward;
'Lay out the viands.' At the word, they raised
A tent of satin, elaborately wrought
With fair Corinna's triumph; here she stood,
Engirt with many a florid maiden-cheek,
The woman-conqueror; woman-conquer'd
there

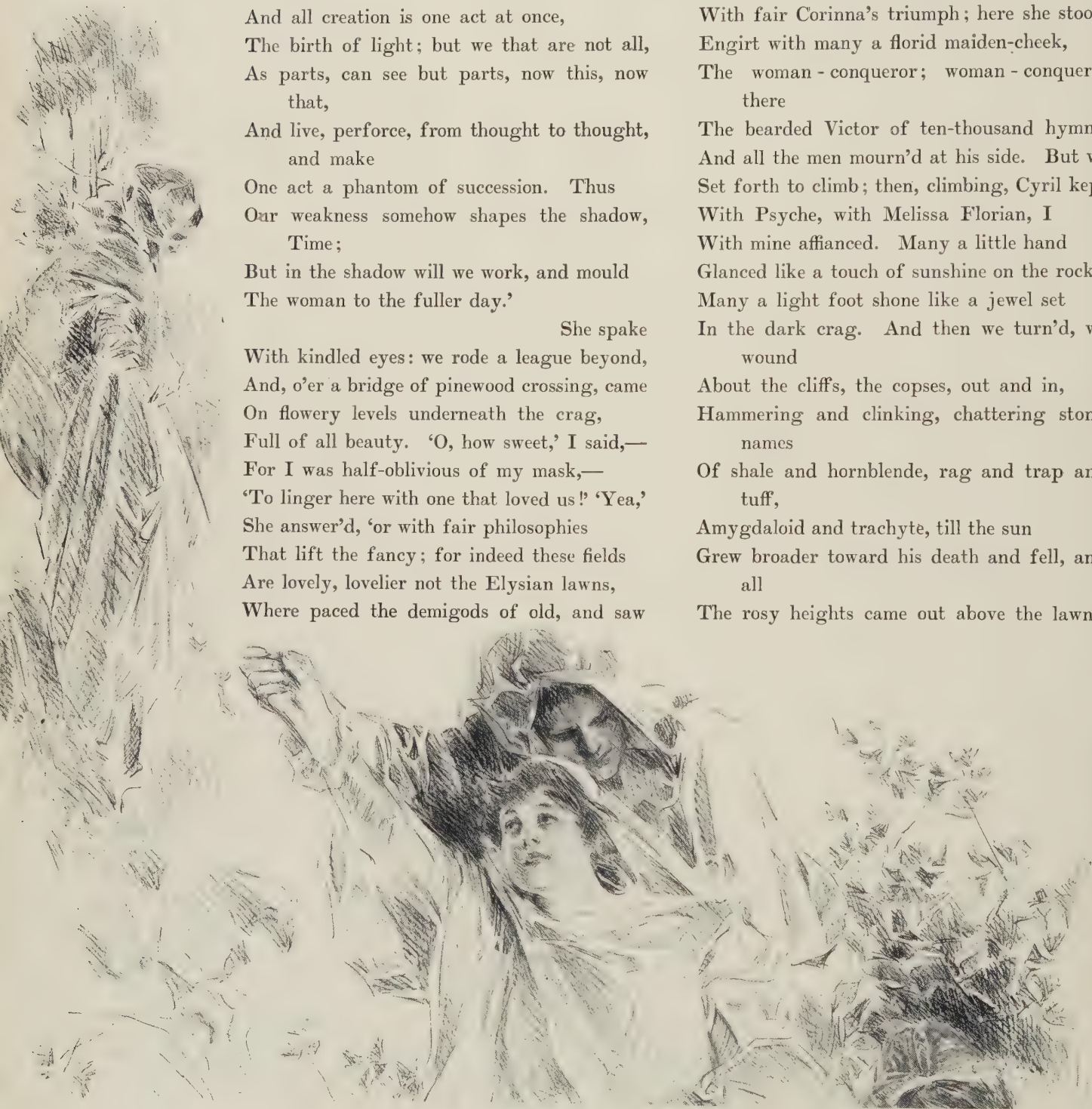
The bearded Victor of ten-thousand hymns,
And all the men mourn'd at his side. But we
Set forth to climb; then, climbing, Cyril kept
With Psyche, with Melissa Florian, I
With mine affianced. Many a little hand
Glanced like a touch of sunshine on the rocks,
Many a light foot shone like a jewel set
In the dark crag. And then we turn'd, we
wound

About the cliffs, the copses, out and in,
Hammering and clinking, chattering stony
names

Of shale and hornblende, rag and trap and
tuff,

Amygdaloid and trachyte, till the sun
Grew broader toward his death and fell, and
all

The rosy heights came out above the lawns.



S O N G

The splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story ;

The splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying,
dying.

O, hark, O, hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O, sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying,
dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying,
dying.



PART FOUR



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PART FOUR

'THERE sinks the nebulous star we call the
sun,
If that hypothesis of theirs be sound,'
Said Ida; 'let us down and rest;' and we
Down from the lean and wrinkled precipices,
By every coppice-feather'd chasm and cleft,
Dropt thro' the ambrosial gloom to where below
No bigger than a glowworm shone the tent
Lamp-lit from the inner. Once she lean'd on me,
Descending; once or twice she lent her hand,
And blissful palpitations in the blood
Stirring a sudden transport rose and fell.

But when we planted level feet, and dipt
Beneath the satin dome and enter'd in,
There leaning deep in broider'd down we sank
Our elbows; on a tripod in the midst
A fragrant flame rose, and before us glow'd
Fruit, blossom, viand, amber wine, and gold.

Then she, 'Let some one sing to us; light-
lier move

The minutes fledged with music;' and a maid,
Of those beside her, smote her harp and sang,

'Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

'Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the under-
world,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

'Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer
dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering
square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

THE PRINCESS

'Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more!'

She ended with such passion that the tear
She sang of shook and fell, an erring pearl
Lost in her bosom; but with some disdain
Answer'd the Princess: 'If indeed there haunt
About the moulder'd lodges of the past
So sweet a voice and vague, fatal to men,
Well needs it we should cram our ears with
wool
And so pace by. But thine are fancies hatch'd
In silken-folded idleness; nor is it
Wiser to weep a true occasion lost,
But trim our sails, and let old by-gones be,
While down the streams that float us each
and all
To the issue, goes, like glittering bergs of
ice,

Throne after throne, and molten on the waste
Becomes a cloud; for all things serve their
time

Toward that great year of equal might and
rights.

Nor would I fight with iron laws, in the end
Found golden. Let the past be past, let be
Their cancell'd Babels; tho' the rough kex
break

The starr'd mosaic, and the beard-blown goat
Hang on the shaft, and the wild fig-tree split
Their monstrous idols, care not while we hear
A trumpet in the distance pealing news
Of better, and Hope, a poisoning eagle, burns
Above the unrisen morrow.' Then to me,
'Know you no song of your own land,' she
said,

'Not such as moans about the retrospect,
But deals with the other distance and
the hues

Of promise; not a death's-head at
the wine?'

Then I remember'd one myself had made,
What time I watch'd the swallow winging
south
From mine own land, part made long since,
and part
Now while I sang, and maiden-like as far
As I could ape their treble did I sing.

'O, Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying south,
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,
And tell her, tell her, what I tell to thee.

'O, tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest
each,
That bright and fierce and fickle is the
South,
And dark and true and tender is the North.

'O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and
light
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

'O, were I thou that she might take me in,
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died!

'Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with
love,
Delaying as the tender ash delays
To clothe herself, when all the woods are
green?

'O, tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is
flown;
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,
But in the North long since my nest is made.

'O, tell her, brief is life but love is long,
And brief the sun of summer in the North,
And brief the moon of beauty in the South.

'O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,
Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make
her mine,
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee.'



A MEDLEY

I ceased, and all the ladies, each at each,
 Like the Ithacensian suitors in old time,
 Stared with great eyes, and laugh'd with alien
 lips,
 And knew not what they meant; for still my
 voice
 Rang false. But smiling, 'Not for thee,'
 she said,
 'O Bulbul, any rose of Gulistan
 Shall burst her veil; marsh-divers, rather,
 maid,
 Shall croak thee sister, or the meadow-crake
 Grate her harsh kindred in the grass—and
 this
 A mere love-poem! O, for such, my friend,
 We hold them slight; they mind us of the
 time
 When we made bricks in Egypt. Knaves are
 men,
 That lute and flute fantastic tenderness,
 And dress the victim to the offering up,
 And paint the gates of Hell with Paradise,
 And play the slave to gain the tyranny.
 Poor soul! I had a maid of honor once;
 She wept her true eyes blind for such a one,
 A rogue of canzonets and serenades.
 I loved her. Peace be with her. She is dead.
 So they blaspheme the muse! But great is
 song
 Used to great ends; ourself have often tried
 Valkyrian hymns, or into rhythm have dash'd
 The passion of the prophetess; for song
 Is duer unto freedom, force and growth
 Of spirit, than to junketing and love.
 Love is it? Would this same mock-love, and
 this
 Mock-Hymen were laid up like winter bats,
 Till all men grew to rate us at our worth,
 Not vassals to be beat, nor pretty babes
 To be dandled, no, but living wills, and
 sphered
 Whole in ourselves and owed to none.
 Enough!
 But now to leaven play with profit, you,

Know you no song, the true growth of your
 soil,
 That gives the manners of your country-
 women?"

She spoke and turn'd her sumptuous head
 with eyes
 Of shining expectation fixt on mine.
 Then while I dragg'd my brains for such a
 song,
 Cyril, with whom the bell-mouth'd glass had
 wrought,
 Or master'd by the sense of sport, began
 To troll a careless, careless tavern-catch
 Of Moll and Meg, and strange experiences
 Unmeet for ladies. Florian nodded at him,
 I frowning; Psyche flush'd and wann'd and
 shook;
 The lily-like Melissa dropp'd her brows.
 'Forbear,' the Princess cried; 'Forbear, sir,' I;
 And heated thro' and thro' with wrath and
 love,
 I smote him on the breast. He started up;
 There rose a shriek as of a city sack'd;
 Melissa clamor'd, 'Flee the death;' 'To
 horse!'
 Said Ida, 'home! to horse!' and fled, as flies
 A troop of snowy doves athwart the dusk
 When some one batters at the dovecote doors,
 Disorderly the women. Alone I stood
 With Florian, cursing Cyril, vext at heart
 In the pavilion. There like parting hopes
 I heard them passing from me; hoof by hoof,
 And every hoof a knell to my desires,
 Clang'd on the bridge; and then another
 shriek,
 'The Head, the Head, the Princess, O the
 Head!'
 For blind with rage she miss'd the plank, and
 roll'd
 In the river. Out I sprang from glow to
 gloom;
 There whirl'd her white robe like a blossom'd
 branch



THE PRINCESS

Rapt to the horrible fall. A glance I gave,
No more, but woman-vested as I was
Plunged, and the flood drew; yet I caught
her; then

Oaring one arm, and bearing in my left
The weight of all the hopes of half the
world,

Strove to buffet to land in vain. A tree
Was half-disrooted from his place and
stoop'd

To drench his dark locks in the gurgling
wave

Mid-channel. Right on this we drove and
caught,

And grasping down the boughs I gain'd the
shore.

There stood her maidens glimmeringly
group'd

In the hollow bank. One reaching forward
drew

My burthen from mine arms; they cried, 'She
lives.'

They bore her back into the tent: but I,
So much a kind of shame within me wrought,
Not yet endured to meet her opening eyes,
Nor found my friends; but push'd alone on
foot—

For since her horse was lost I left her mine—
Across the woods, and less from Indian craft
Than beelike instinct hiveward, found at
length

The garden portals. Two great statues, Art
And Science, Caryatids, lifted up

A weight of emblem, and betwixt were valves
Of open-work in which the hunter rued
His rash intrusion, manlike, but his brows
Had sprouted, and the branches thereupon
Spread out at top, and grimly spiked the
gates.

A little space was left between the horns.
Thro' which I clamber'd o'er at top with pain,
Dropt on the sward, and up the linden walks,

And, tost on thoughts that changed from
hue to hue,

Now poring on the glowworm, now the star,
I paced the terrace, till the Bear had wheel'd
Thro' a great arc his seven slow suns.

A step

Of lightest echo, then a loftier form
Than female, moving thro' the uncertain
gloom,

Disturb'd me with the doubt 'if this were she,'
But it was Florian. 'Hist, O, hist!' he said,
'They seek us; out so late is out of rules.

Moreover, "Seize the strangers" is the cry.
How came you here?' I told him. 'I,' said he,
'Last of the train, a moral leper, I,
To whom none spake, half-sick at heart, re-
turn'd.

Arriving all confused among the rest
With hooded brows I crept into the hall,
And, couch'd behind a Judith, underneath
The head of Holofernes peep'd and saw.
Girl after girl was call'd to trial; each
Disclaim'd all knowledge of us; last of all,
Melissa; trust me, sir, I pitied her.

She, question'd if she knew us men, at first
Was silent; closer prest, denied it not,
And then, demanded if her mother knew,
Or Psyche, she affirm'd not, or denied;
From whence the Royal mind, familiar with
her.

Easily gather'd either guilt. She sent
For Psyche, but she was not there; she call'd
For Psyche's child to cast it from the doors;
She sent for Blanche to accuse her face to
face;

And I slipt out. But whither will you now?
And where are Psyche, Cyril? both are fled;
What, if together? that were not so well.
Would rather we had never come! I dread
His wildness, and the chances of the dark.'

'And yet,' I said, 'you wrong him more
than I
That struck him; this is proper to the clown,





A MEDLEY

Tho' smock'd, or furr'd and purpled, still
the clown,
To harm the thing that trusts him, and to
shame
That which he says he loves. For Cyril,
howe'er
He deal in frolic, as to-night—the song
Might have been worse and sinn'd in grosser
lips
Beyond all pardon—as it is, I hold
These flashes on the surface are not he.
He has a solid base of temperament;
But as the water-lily starts and slides
Upon the level in little puffs of wind,
Tho' anchor'd to the bottom, such is he.'

Scarce had I ceased when from a tamarisk
near
Two Proctors leapt upon us, crying, 'Names!'
He, standing still, was clutch'd; but I began
To thrid the musky-circled mazes, wind
And double in and out the boles, and race
By all the fountains. Fleet I was of foot;
Before me shower'd the rose in flakes; behind
I heard the puff'd pursuer; at mine ear
Bubbled the nightingale and heeded not,
And secret laughter tickled all my soul.
At last I hook'd my ankle in a vine
That claspt the feet of a Mnemosyne,
And falling on my face was caught and
known.

They haled us to the Princess where she
sat
High in the hall; above her droop'd a lamp,
And made the single jewel on her brow
Burn like the mystic fire on a mast-head,
Prophet of storm; a handmaid on each side
Bow'd toward her, combing out her long black
hair
Damp from the river; and close behind her
stood
Eight daughters of the plough, stronger than
men,

Huge women blowzed with health, and wind,
and rain,
And labor. Each was like a Druid rock;
Or like a spire of land that stands apart
Cleft from the main, and wail'd about with
mews.

Then, as we came, the crowd dividing clove
An advent to the throne; and therebeside,
Half-naked as if caught at once from bed
And tumbled on the purple footcloth, lay
The lily-shining child; and on the left,
Bow'd on her palms and folded up from
wrong,
Her round white shoulder shaken with her
sobs,
Melissa knelt; but Lady Blanche erect
Stood up and spake, an affluent orator:

'It was not thus, O Princess, in old days;
You prized my counsel, lived upon my lips.
I led you then to all the Castalies;
I fed you with the milk of every Muse;
I loved you like this kneeler, and you me
Your second mother, those were gracious
times.
Then came your new friend; you began to
change—
I saw it and grieved—to slacken and to cool;
Till taken with her seeming openness
You turn'd your warmer currents all
to her,
To me you froze; this was my meed for all.
Yet I bore up in part from ancient love,
And partly that I hoped to win you back,
And partly conscious of my own deserts,
And partly that you were my civil head,
And chiefly you were born for something
great,
In which I might your fellow-worker be,
When time should serve; and thus a noble
scheme
Grew up from seed we two long since had
sown;



THE PRINCESS



In us true growth, in her a Jonah's gourd,
Up in one night and due to sudden sun.
We took this palace; but even from the first
You stood in your own light and darken'd mine.

What student came but that you planed her path

To Lady Psyche, younger, not so wise,
A foreigner, and I your countrywoman,
I your old friend and tried, she new in all?
But still her lists were swell'd and mine were lean;

Yet I bore up in hope she would be known.
Then came these wolves; *they* knew her; *they* endured,

Long-closeted with her the yesternorn,
To tell her what they were, and she to hear.
And me none told. Not less to an eye like mine,

A lidless watcher of the public weal,
Last night, their mask was patent, and my foot

Was to you. But I thought again; I fear'd
To meet a cold "We thank you, we shall hear of it

From Lady Psyche;" you had gone to her,
She told, perforce, and winning easy grace,
No doubt, for slight delay, remain'd among us
In our young nursery still unknown, the stem
Less grain than touchwood, while my honest heat

Were all miscounted as malignant haste
To push my rival out of place and power.
But public use required she should be known;
And since my oath was ta'en for public use,
I broke the letter of it to keep the sense.

I spoke not then at first, but watch'd them well,
Saw that they kept apart, no mischief done;
And yet this day—tho' you should hate me for it—

I came to tell you; found that you had gone,
Ridden to the hills, she likewise. Now, I thought,

That surely she will speak; if not, then I.
Did she? These monsters blazon'd what they were,

According to the coarseness of their kind,
For thus I hear; and known at last—my work—

And full of cowardice and guilty shame—
I grant in her some sense of shame—she flies;
And I remain on whom to wreak your rage,
I, that have lent my life to build up yours,
I, that have wasted here health, wealth, and time,

And talent, I—you know it—I will not boast;
Dismiss me, and I prophesy your plan,
Divorced from my experience, will be chaff
For every gust of chance, and men will say
We did not know the real light, but chased

The wisp that flickers where no foot can tread.'

She ceased; the Princess answer'd coldly,
'Good;

Your oath is broken; we dismiss you, go.
For this lost lamb'—she pointed to the child—
'Our mind is changed; we take it to ourself.'

Thereat the lady stretch'd a vulture throat,
And shot from crooked lips a haggard smile.
'The plan was mine. I built the nest,' she said,

'To hatch the cuckoo. Rise!' and stoop'd to updrag

Melissa. She, half on her mother propt,
Half-drooping from her, turn'd her face, and cast

A liquid look on Ida, full of prayer,
Which melted Florian's fancy as she hung,
A Niobeän daughter, one arm out,
Appealing to the bolts of heaven; and while
We gazed upon her came a little stir
About the doors, and on a sudden rush'd
Among us, out of breath, as one pursued,
A woman-post in flying raiment. Fear

A MEDLEY

Stared in her eyes, and chalk'd her face, and
wing'd

Her transit to the throne, whereby she fell
Delivering seal'd dispatches which the Head
Took half-amazed, and in her lion's mood
Tore open, silent we with blind surmise
Regarding, while she read, till over brow
And cheek and bosom brake the wrathful
bloom

As of some fire against a stormy cloud,
When the wild peasant rights himself, the rick
Flames, and his anger reddens in the heavens;
For anger most it seem'd, while now her
breast,

Beaten with some great passion at her heart,
Palpitated, her hand shook, and we heard
In the dead hush the papers that she held
Rustle. At once the lost lamb at her feet
Sent out a bitter bleating for its dam.
The plaintive cry jarr'd on her ire; she
crush'd

The scrolls together, made a sudden turn
As if to speak, but, utterance failing her,
She whirl'd them on to me, as who should say
'Read,' and I read—two letters—one her
sire's:

'Fair daughter, when we sent the Prince
your way
We knew not your ungracious laws, which
learnt,

We, conscious of what temper you are built,
Came all in haste to hinder wrong, but fell
Into his father's hand, who has this night,
You lying close upon his territory,
Slipt round and in the dark invested you,
And here he keeps me hostage for his son.'

The second was my father's running thus:
'You have our son; touch not a hair of his
head;
Render him up unscathed; give him your
hand;

Cleave to your contract—tho' indeed we hear
You hold the woman is the better man;

A rampant heresy, such as if it spread
Would make all women kick against their
lords

Thro' all the world, and which might well
deserve

That we this night should pluck your palace
down;

And we will do it, unless you send us back
Our son, on the instant, whole.'

So far I read;

And then stood up and spoke impetuously:

'O, not to pry and peer on your reserve,
But led by golden wishes, and a hope
The child of regal compact, did I break
Your precinct; not a scorner of your sex
But venerator, zealous it should be
All that it might be. Hear me, for I bear,
Tho' man, yet human, whatsoe'er your
wrongs,

From the flaxen curl to the gray lock a life
Less mine than yours. My nurse would tell
me of you;

I babbled for you, as babies for the moon,
Vague brightness; when a boy, you stoop'd
to me

From all high places, lived in all fair lights,
Came in long breezes rapt from inmost south
And blown to inmost north; at eve and dawn
With Ida, Ida, Ida, rang the woods;
The leader wild-swan in among the stars
Would clang it, and lapt in wreaths of glow-
worm light

The mellow breaker inurmur'd Ida. Now,
Because I would have reach'd you, had you
been

Sphered up with Cassiopeia, or the enthroned
Persephone in Hades, now at length,
Those winters of abeyance all worn out,
A man I came to see you; but, indeed,
Not in this frequency can I lend full tongue,
O noble Ida, to those thoughts that wait
On you, their centre. Let me say but this,
That many a famous man and woman, town



THE PRINCESS

And landskip, have I heard of, after seen
The dwarfs of presage; tho' when known,
there grew

Another kind of beauty in detail
Made them worth knowing; but in you I found
My boyish dream involved and dazzled down
And master'd, while that after-beauty makes
Such head from act to act, from hour to hour,
Within me, that except you slay me here,
According to your bitter statute-book,
I cannot cease to follow you, as they say
The seal does music; who desire you more
Than growing boys their manhood; dying
lips,

With many thousand matters left to do,
The breath of life; O, more than poor men
wealth,

Than sick men health—yours, yours, not
mine—but half

Without you; with you, whole; and of those
halves

You worthiest; and howe'er you block and bar
Your heart with system out from mine, I hold
That it becomes no man to nurse despair,
But in the teeth of clench'd antagonisms
To follow up the worthiest till he die.
Yet that I came not all unauthorized
Behold your father's letter."

On one knee
Kneeling, I gave it, which she caught, and
dash'd

Unopen'd at her feet. A tide of fierce
Invective seem'd to wait behind her lips,
As waits a river level with the dam
Ready to burst and flood the world with foam;
And so she would have spoken, but there rose
A hubbub in the court of half the maids
Gather'd together; from the illumined hall
Long lanes of splendor slanted o'er a press
Of snowy shoulders, thick as herded ewes,
And rainbow robes, and gems and gemlike
eyes,

And gold and golden heads. They to and
fro

Fluctuated, as flowers in storm, some red, some
pale,

All open-mouth'd, all gazing to the light,
Some crying there was an army in the land,
And some that men were in the very walls,
And some they cared not; till a clamor grew
As of a new-world Babel, woman-built,
And worse-confounded. High above them
stood

The placid marble Muses, looking peace.

Not peace she look'd, the Head; but ris-
ing up

Robed in the long night of her deep hair, so
To the open window moved, remaining there
Fixt like a beacon-tower above the waves
Of tempest, when the crimson-rolling eye
Glazes ruin, and the wild birds on the light
Dash themselves dead. She stretch'd her arms
and call'd

Across the tumult, and the tumult fell.

"What fear ye, brawlers? am not I your
Head?

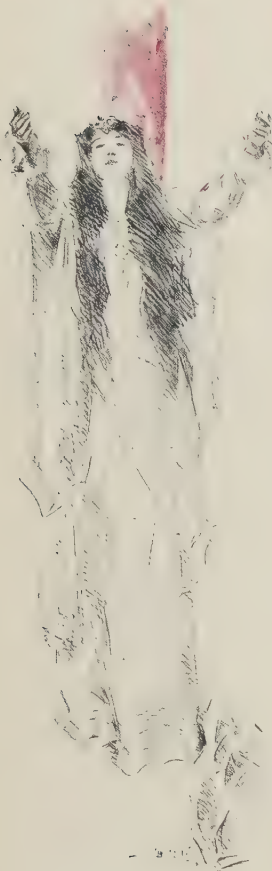
On me, me, me, the storm first breaks; I dare
All these male thunderbolts; what is it ye fear?
Peace! there are those to avenge us and they
come;

If not,—myself were like enough, O girls,
To unfurl the maiden banner of our rights,
And clad in iron burst the ranks of war,
Or, falling, protomartyr of our cause,
Die; yet I blame you not so much for fear;
Six thousand years of fear have made you
that

From which I would redeem you. But for
those

That stir this hubbub—you and you—I know
Your faces there in the crowd—to-morrow
morn

We hold a great convention; then shall they
That love their voices more than duty, learn
With whom they deal, dismiss'd in shame to
live



A MEDLEY

No wiser than their mothers, household stuff,
Live chattels, mincers of each other's fame,
Full of weak poison, turnspits for the clown,
The drunkard's football, laughing-stocks of
Time,

Whose brains are in their hands and in their
heels,

But fit to flaunt, to dress, to dance, to thrum,
To tramp, to scream, to burnish, and to scour,
For ever slaves at home and fools abroad.'

She, ending, waved her hands; thereat the
crowd

Muttering, dissolved; then with a smile, that
look'd

A stroke of cruel sunshine on the cliff,
When all the glens are drown'd in azure gloom
Of thunder-shower, she floated to us and said:

"You have done well and like a gentleman,
And like a prince; you have our thanks for
all.

And you look well too in your woman's dress.
Well have you done and like a gentleman.
You saved our life; we owe you bitter thanks.
Better have died and spilt our bones in the
flood—

Then men had said—but now—what hinders
me

To take such bloody vengeance on you
both?—

Yet since our father—wasps in our good hive,
You would-be quenchers of the light to be,
Barbarians, grosser than your native bears—
O, would I had his sceptre for one hour!

You that have dared to break our bound, and
gull'd

Our servants, wrong'd and lied and thwarted
us—

I wed with thee! I bound by precontract
Your bride, your bondslave! not tho' all the
gold

That veins the world were pack'd to make
your crown,

And every spoken tongue should lord you.
Sir,

Your falsehood and yourself are hateful to us;
I trample on your offers and on you.

Begone; we will not look upon you more.
Here, push them out at gates.'

In wrath she spake.
Then those eight mighty daughters of the
plough

Bent their broad faces toward us and ad-
dress'd

Their motion. Twice I sought to plead my
cause,

But on my shoulder hung their heavy hands,
The weight of destiny; so from her face
They push'd us, down the steps, and thro'
the court,

And with grim laughter thrust us out at
gates.

We cross'd the street and gain'd a petty
mound

Beyond it, whence we saw the lights and heard
The voices murmuring. While I listen'd,
came

On a sudden the weird seizure and the doubt.
I seem'd to move among a world of ghosts;
The Princess with her monstrous woman-
guard,

The jest and earnest working side by side,
The cataract and the tumult and the kings
Were shadows; and the long fantastic night
With all its doings had and had not been,
And all things were and were not.

This went by
As strangely as it came, and on my spirits
Settled a gentle cloud of melancholy—

Not long; I shook it off; for spite of doubts
And sudden ghostly shadowings I was one
To whom the touch of all mischance but
came

As night to him that sitting on a hill
Sees the midsummer, midnight, Norway sun
Set into sunrise; then we moved away.





INTERLUDE

Thy voice is heard thro' rolling drums
That beat to battle where he stands;
Thy face across his fancy comes,
And gives the battle to his hands.
A moment, while the trumpets blow,
He sees his brood about thy knee;
The next, like fire he meets the foe,
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

So Lilia sang. We thought her half-possess'd,
She struck such warbling fury thro' the words;
And, after, feigning pique at what she call'd
The raillery, or grotesque, or false sublime—
Like one that wishes at a dance to change
The music—clapt her hands and cried for war,
Or some grand fight to kill and make an end.
And he that next inherited the tale,
Half turning to the broken statue, said,
'Sir Ralph has got your colors; if I prove
Your knight, and fight your battle, what for me?'
It chanced, her empty glove upon the tomb
Lay by her like a model of her hand.
She took it and she flung it. 'Fight,' she said,
'And make us all we would be, great and good.'
He knightlike in his cap instead of casque.
A cap of Tyrol borrow'd from the hall,
Arranged the favor, and assumed the Prince.



PART FIVE





PART FIVE

Now, scarce three paces measured from the mound,
We stumbled on a stationary voice,
And 'Stand, who goes?' 'Two from the palace,' I.
'The second two; they wait,' he said, 'pass on;
His Highness wakes;' and one, that clash'd
in arms,
By glimmering lanes and walls of canvas led
Threading the soldier-city, till we heard
The drowsy folds of our great ensign shake
From blazon'd lions o'er the imperial tent
Whispers of war.

Entering, the sudden light
Dazed me half-blind. I stood and seem'd to hear,

As in a poplar grove when a light wind wakes
A lisp of the innumerable leaf and dies,
Each hissing in his neighbor's ear; and then
A strangled titter, out of which there brake

On all sides, clamoring etiquette to death,
Unmeasured mirth; while now the two old
kings
Began to wag their baldness up and down,
The fresh young captains flash'd their glittering teeth,
The huge bush-bearded barons heaved and blew,
And slain with laughter roll'd the gilded squire.

At length my sire, his rough cheek wet with tears,
Panted from weary sides, 'King, you are free!
We did but keep you surety for our son,
If this be he,—or a draggled mawkin, thou,
That tends her bristled grunterns in the sludge.'
For I was drench'd with ooze, and torn with briers,

THE PRINCESS



More crumpled than a poppy from the sheath,
And all one rag, disprinc'd from head to heel.
Then some one sent beneath his vaulted palm
A whisper'd jest to some one near him, 'Look,
He has been among his shadows.' 'Satan take
The old women and their shadows!'—thus the
king
Roar'd—'make yourself a man to fight with
men.
Go; Cyril told us all.'

As boys that slink
From ferule and the trespass-chiding eye,
Away we stole, and transient in a trice
From what was left of faded woman-slough
To sheathing splendors and the golden scale
Of harness, issued in the sun, that now
Leapt from the dewy shoulders of the earth,
And hit the Northern hills. Here Cyril met us,
A little shy at first, but by and by
We twain, with mutual pardon ask'd and
given
For stroke and song, resolder'd peace, whereon
Follow'd his tale. Amazed he fled away
Thro' the dark land, and later in the night
Had come on Psyche weeping: 'then we fell
Into your father's hand, and there she lies,
But will not speak nor stir.'

He show'd a tent
A stone-shot off; we enter'd in, and there
Among piled arms and rough accoutrements,
Pitiful sight, wrapp'd in a soldier's cloak,
Like some sweet sculpture draped from head
to foot,
And push'd by rude hands from its pedestal,
All her fair length upon the ground she lay;
And at her head a follower of the camp,
A charr'd and wrinkled piece of womanhood,
Sat watching like a watcher by the dead.

Then Florian knelt, and 'Come,' he whisper'd to her,
'Lift up your head, sweet sister; lie not thus.
What have you done but right? you could not
slay

Me, nor your prince; look up, be comforted.
Sweet is it to have done the thing one ought,
When fallen in darker ways.' And likewise I:
'Be comforted; have I not lost her too,
In whose least act abides the nameless charm
That none has else for me?' She heard, she
moved,

She moan'd, a folded voice; and up she sat,
And raised the cloak from brows as pale
and smooth

As those that mourn half-shrouded over death
In deathless marble. 'Her,' she said, 'my
friend—

Parted from her—betray'd her cause and
mine—

Where shall I breathe? why kept ye not your
faith?

O base and bad! what comfort? none for me?
To whom remorseful Cyril, 'Yet I pray
Take comfort; live, dear lady, for your
child!'

At which she lifted up her voice and cried:

'Ah me, my babe, my blossom, ah, my child,
My one sweet child, whom I shall see no more!
For now will cruel Ida keep her back;
And either she will die from want of care,
Or sicken with ill-usage, when they say
The child is hers—for every little fault,
The child is hers; and they will beat my girl
Remembering her mother—O my flower!
Or they will take her, they will make her hard,
And she will pass me by in after-life
With some cold reverence worse than were
she dead.

Ill mother that I was to leave her there,
To lag behind, scared by the cry they made,
The horror of the shame among them all.
But I will go and sit beside the doors,
And make a wild petition night and day,
Until they hate to hear me like a wind
Wailing for ever, till they open to me,
And lay my little blossom at my feet,
My babe, my sweet Aglaïa, my one child:

A MEDLEY

And I will take her up and go my way,
And satisfy my soul with kissing her.
Ah! what might that man not deserve of me
Who gave me back my child?' 'Be comforted,'

Said Cyril, 'you shall have it;' but again
She veil'd her brows, and prone she sank,
and so,
Like tender things that being caught feign
death,
Spoke not, nor stirr'd.

By this a murmur ran
Thro' all the camp, and inward raced the
scouts

With rumor of Prince Arac hard at hand.
We left her by the woman, and without
Found the gray kings at parle; and 'Look
you,' cried

My father, 'that our compact be fulfill'd.
You have spoilt this child; she laughs at
you and man;
She wrongs herself, her sex, and me, and
him.

But red-faced war has rods of steel and fire;
She yields, or war.'

Then Gama turn'd to me:
'We fear, indeed, you spent a stormy time
With our strange girl; and yet they say that
still
You love her. Give us, then, your mind at
large:

How say you, war or not?"

'Not war, if possible,
O king,' I said, 'lest from the abuse of war,
The desecrated shrine, the trampled year,
The smouldering homestead, and the house-
hold flower

Torn from the lintel—all the common
wrong—

A smoke go up thro' which I loom to her
Three times a monster. Now she lightens
scorn

At him that mars her plan, but then would
hate—

And every voice she talk'd with ratify it,
And every face she look'd on justify it—
The general foe. More soluble is this knot
By gentleness than war. I want her love.
What were I nigher this altho' we dash'd
Your cities into shards with catapults?—
She would not love—or brought her chain'd,
a slave,

The lifting of whose eyelash is my lord?
Not ever would she love, but brooding turn
The book of scorn, till all my flitting chance
Were caught within the record of her wrongs
And crush'd to death; and rather, Sire, than
this

I would the old god of war himself were dead,
Forgotten, rusting on his iron hills,
Rotting on some wild shore with ribs of wreck,
Or like an old-world mammoth bulk'd in ice,
Not to be molten out.'

And roughly spake
My father: 'Tut, you know them not, the
girls.

Boy, when I hear you prate I almost think
That idiot legend credible. Look you, sir!
Man is the hunter; woman is his game.
The sleek and shining creatures of the chase,
We hunt them for the beauty of their skins;
They love us for it, and we ride them down.
Wheedling and siding with them! Out! for
shame!

Boy, there's no rose that's half so dear to them
As he that does the thing they dare not do,
Breathing and sounding beauteous battle,
comes

With the air of the trumpet round him, and
leaps in

Among the women, snares them by the score
Flatter'd and fluster'd, wins, tho' dash'd with
death

He reddens what he kisses. Thus I won
Your mother, a good mother, a good wife,
Worth winning; but this firebrand—gentle-
ness

To such as her! if Cyril spake her true,



THE PRINCESS

To catch a dragon in a cherry net,
To trip a tigress with a gossamer,
Were wisdom to it.'

'Yea, but, Sire,' I cried,
'Wild natures need wise curbs. The soldier?
No!

What dares not Ida do that she should prize
The soldier? I beheld her, when she rose
The yesternight, and storming in extremes
Stood for her cause, and flung defiance down
Gagelike to man, and had not shunn'd the
death,

No, not the soldier's; yet I hold her, king,
True woman; but you clash them all in one,
That have as many differences as we.
The violet varies from the lily as far
As oak from elm. One loves the soldier, one
The silken priest of peace, one this, one that,
And some unworthily; their sinless faith,
A maiden moon that sparkles on a sty,
Glorifying clown and satyr; whence they
need

More breadth of culture. Is not Ida right?
They worth it? truer to the law within?
Severer in the logic of a life?

Twice as magnetic to sweet influences
Of earth and heaven? and she of whom you
speak,

My mother, looks as whole as some serene
Creation minted in the golden moods
Of sovereign artists; not a thought, a touch,
But pure as lines of green that streak the
white

Of the first snowdrop's inner leaves; I say,
Not like the piebald miscellany, man,
Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual
mire,

But whole and one; and take them all-in-all,
Were we ourselves but half as good, as kind,
As truthful, much that Ida claims as right
Had ne'er been mooted, but as frankly theirs
As dues of Nature. To our point; not war,
Lest I lose all.'

'Nay, nay, you spake but sense,

Said Gama. 'We remember love ourself
In our sweet youth; we did not rate him then
This red-hot iron to be shaped with blows.
You talk almost like Ida; *she* can talk;
And there is something in it as you say:
But you talk kindlier; we esteem you for it.—
He seems a gracious and a gallant Prince,
I would he had our daughter. For the rest,
Our own detention, why, the causes weigh'd,
Fatherly fears—you used us courteously—
We would do much to gratify your Prince—
We pardon it; and for your ingress here
Upon the skirt and fringe of our fair land,
You did but come as goblins in the night,
Nor in the furrow broke the ploughman's
head,

Nor burnt the grange, nor buss'd the milk-
ing-maid,

Nor robb'd the farmer of his bowl of cream.
But let your Prince—our royal word upon it,
He comes back safe—ride with us to our lines,
And speak with Arac. Arac's word is thrice
As ours with Ida; something may be done—
I know not what—and ours shall see us
friends.

You, likewise, our late guests, if so you will,
Follow us. Who knows? we four may build
some plan

Foursquare to opposition.'

Here he reach'd
White hands of farewell to my sire, who
growl'd

An answer which, half-muffled in his beard,
Let so much out that gave us leave to go.

Then rode we with the old king across the
lawns

Beneath huge trees, a thousand rings of
Spring

In every bole, a song on every spray
Of birds that piped their Valentines, and woke
Desire in me to infuse my tale of love
In the old king's ears, who promised help,
and oozed





Harriet Hurdley Christy 1911

A MEDLEY

All o'er with honey'd answer as we rode;
And blossom-fragrant slipt the heavy dews
Gather'd by night and peace, with each light
air

On our mail'd heads. But other thoughts than
peace

Burnt in us, when we saw the embattled
squares

And squadrons of the Prince, trampling the
flowers

With clamor; for among them rose a cry
As if to greet the king; they made a halt;
The horses yell'd; they clash'd their arms;
the drum

Beat; merrily-blowing shrill'd the martial
fife;

And in the blast and bray of the long horn
And serpent-throated bugle, undulated
The banner. Anon to meet us lightly pranced
Three captains out; nor ever had I seen
Such thews of men. The midmost and the
highest

Was Arac; all about his motion clung
The shadow of his sister, as the beam
Of the East, that play'd upon them, made
them glance

Like those three stars of the airy Giant's
zone,

That glitter burnish'd by the frosty dark;
And as the fiery Sirius alters hue,
And bickers into red and emerald, shone
Their morions, wash'd with morning, as they
came.

And I that prated peace, when first I heard
War-music, felt the blind wild-beast of force,
Whose home is in the sinews of a man,
Stir in me as to strike. Then took the king
His three broad sons; with now a wandering
hand

And now a pointed finger, told them all.
A common light of smiles at our disguise
Broke from their lips, and, ere the windy
jest

Had labor'd down within his ample lungs,
The genial giant, Arac, roll'd himself
Thrice in the saddle, then burst out in words:

'Our land invaded, 'sdeath! and he himself
Your captive, yet my father wills not war!
And, 'sdeath! myself, what care I, war or no?
But then this question of your troth remains;
And there's a downright honest meaning in
her.

She flies too high, she flies too high! and yet
She ask'd but space and fair-play for her
scheme;

She prest and prest it on me—I myself,
What know I of these things? but, life and
soul!

I thought her half-right talking of her
wrongs;

I say she flies too high, 'sdeath! what of that?
I take her for the flower of womankind,
And so I often told her, right or wrong;
And, Prince, she can be sweet to those she
loves,

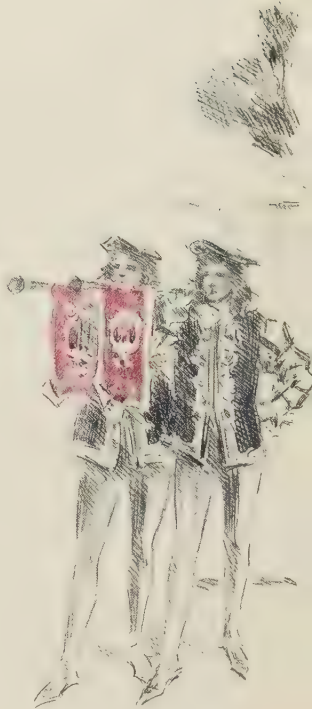
And, right or wrong, I care not; this is all,
I stand upon her side; she made me swear it—
'Sdeath!—and with solemn rites by candle-
light—

Swear by Saint something—I forget her
Name—

Her that talk'd down the fifty wisest men;
She was a princess too; and so I swore.
Come, this is all; she will not; waive your
claim.

If not, the foughten field, what else, at once
Decides it, 'sdeath! against my father's will.'

I lagg'd in answer, loth to render up
My precontract, and loth by brainless war
To cleave the rift of difference deeper yet;
Till one of those two brothers, half aside
And fingering at the hair about his lip,
To prick us on to combat, 'Like to like!
The woman's garment hid the woman's heart.'
A taunt that clench'd his purpose like a blow!



THE PRINCESS



For fiery-short was Cyril's counter-scoff,
And sharp I answered, touch'd upon the point
Where idle boys are cowards to their shame,
'Decide it here; why not? we are three to
three.'

Then spake the third: 'But three to three?
no more?

No more, and in our noble sister's cause?
More, more, for honor! every captain waits
Hungry for honor, angry for his king.
More, more, some fifty on a side, that each
'May breathe himself, and quick! by overthrow
Of these or those, the question settled die.'

'Yea,' answer'd I, 'for this wild wreath of
air,

This flake of rainbow flying on the highest
Foam of men's deeds—this honor, if ye will.
It needs must be for honor if at all;
Since, what decision? if we fail we fail,
And if we win we fail; she would not keep
Her compact.' 'Sdeath! but we will send to
her,'

Said Arac, 'worthy reasons why she should
Bide by this issue; let our missive thro',
And you shall have her answer by the word.'

'Boys!' shriek'd the old king, but vainlier
than a hen

To her false daughters in the pool; for none
Regarded; neither seem'd there more to say.
Back rode we to my father's camp, and
found

He thrice had sent a herald to the gates,
To learn if Ida yet would cede our claim,
Or by denial flush her babbling wells
With her own people's life; three times he
went.

The first, he blew and blew, but none appear'd;
He batter'd at the doors, none came; the next,
An awful voice within had warn'd him thence;
The third, and those eight daughters of the
plough

Came sallying thro' the gates, and caught his
hair,

And so belabor'd him on rib and cheek
They made him wild. Not less one glance he
caught

Thro' open doors of Ida station'd there
Unshaken, clinging to her purpose, firm
Tho' compass'd by two armies and the noise
Of arms; and standing like a stately pine
Set in a cataract on an island-crag,
When storm is on the heights, and right and
left

Suck'd from the dark heart of the long hills
roll

The torrents, dash'd to the vale; and yet her
will

Bred will in me to overcome it or fall.

But when I told the king that I was pledged
To fight in tourney for my bride, he clash'd
His iron palms together with a cry;
Himself would tilt it out among the lads;
But overborne by all his bearded lords
With reasons drawn from age and state, per-
force

He yielded, wroth and red, with fierce demur;
And many a bold knight started up in heat,
And sware to combat for my claim till death.

All on this side the palace ran the field
Flat to the garden-wall; and likewise here,
Above the gardener's glowing blossom-belts,
A column'd entry shone and marble stairs,
And great bronze valves, emboss'd with
Tomyris

And what she did to Cyrus after fight,
But now fast barr'd. So here upon the flat
All that long morn the lists were ham-
mer'd up,

And all that morn the heralds to and fro,
With message and defiance, went and came;
Last, Ida's answer, in a royal hand,
But shaken here and there, and rolling words
Oration-like. I kiss'd it and I read:

A MEDLEY

'O brother, you have known the pangs we
felt,

What heats of indignation when we heard
Of those that iron-cramp'd their women's feet;
Of lands in which at the altar the poor bride
Gives her harsh groom for bridal-gift a
scourge;

Of living hearts that crack within the fire
Where smoulder their dead despots; and of
those,—

Mothers,—that, all prophetic pity, fling
Their pretty maids in the running flood, and
swoops

The vulture, beak and talon, at the heart
Made for all noble motion. And I saw
That equal baseness lived in sleeker times
With smoother men; the old leaven leaven'd
all;

Millions of throats would bawl for civil rights,
No woman named; therefore I set my face
Against all men, and lived but for mine own.
Far off from men I built a fold for them;
I stored it full of rich memorial;

I fenced it round with gallant institutes,
And biting laws to scare the beasts of prey,
And prosper'd, till a rout of saucy boys
Brake on us at our books, and marr'd our
peace,

Mask'd like our maids, blustering I know not
what

Of insolence and love, some pretext held
Of baby troth, invalid, since my will
Seal'd not the bond—the striplings!—for
their sport!—

I tamed my leopards; shall I not tame these?
Or you? or I? for since you think me touch'd
In honor—what! I would not aught of
false—

Is not our cause pure? and whereas I know
Your prowess, Arac, and what mother's blood
You draw from, fight! You failing, I abide
What end soever; fail you will not. Still,
Take not his life, he risk'd it for my own;
His mother lives. Yet whatsoe'er you do,

Fight and fight well; strike and strike home.

O dear

Brothers, the woman's angel guards you, you
The sole men to be mingled with our cause,
The sole men we shall prize in the aftertime,
Your very armor hallow'd, and your statues
Rear'd, sung to, when, this gadfly brush'd
aside,

We plant a solid foot into the Time,
And mould a generation strong to move
With claim on claim from right to right, till
she

Whose name is yoked with children's know
herself;

And Knowledge, in our own land make her
free,

And, ever following those two-crowned twins,
Commerce and Conquest, shower the fiery
grain

Of freedom broadcast over all that orbs
Between the Northern and the Southern morn.'

Then came a postscript dash'd across the
rest:

'See that there be no traitors in your camp.
We seem a nest of traitors—none to trust
Since our arms fail'd—this Egypt-plague of
men!

Almost our maids were better at their homes,
Than thus man-girdled here. Indeed I think
Our chiefest comfort is the little child
Of one unworthy mother, which she left.
She shall not have it back; the child shall
grow

To prize the authentic mother of her mind.
I took it for an hour in mine own bed
This morning; there the tender orphan hands
Felt at my heart, and seem'd to charm from
thence

The wrath I nursed against the world.
Farewell.'

I ceased; he said, 'Stubborn, but she may
sit



THE PRINCESS



Upon a king's right hand in thunderstorms,
And breed up warriors! See now, tho' yourself

Be dazzled by the wildfire Love to sloughs
That swallow common sense, the spindling
king,

This Gama swamp'd in lazy tolerance.

When the man wants weight, the woman takes
it up,

And topples down the scales; but this is fixt
As are the roots of earth and base of all,—
Man for the field and woman for the hearth;
Man for the sword, and for the needle she;
Man with the head, and woman with the
heart;

Man to command, and woman to obey;
All else confusion. Look you! the gray mare
Is ill to live with, when her whinny shrills
From tile to scullery, and her small goodman
Shrinks in his arm-chair while the fires of hell
Mix with his hearth. But you—she's yet a
colt—

Take, break her; strongly groom'd and
straitly curb'd

She might not rank with those detestable
That let the bantling scald at home, and
brawl

Their rights or wrongs like potherbs in the
street.

They say she's comely; there's the fairer
chance.

I like her none the less for rating at her!
Besides, the woman wed is not as we,
But suffers change of frame. A lusty brace
Of twins may weed her of her folly. Boy,
The bearing and the training of a child
Is woman's wisdom.'

Thus the hard old king.

I took my leave, for it was nearly noon;
I pored upon her letter which I held,
And on the little clause, 'take not his life';
I mused on that wild morning in the woods,
And on the 'Follow, follow, thou shalt win';
I thought on all the wrathful king had said,

And how the strange betrothment was to end.
Then I remember'd that burnt sorcerer's curse
That one should fight with shadows and
should fall;

And like a flash the weird affection came.
King, camp, and college turn'd to hollow
shows;

I seem'd to move in old memorial tilts,
And doing battle with forgotten ghosts,
To dream myself the shadow of a dream;
And ere I woke it was the point of noon,
The lists were ready. Empanoplied and
plumed

We enter'd in, and waited, fifty there
Opposed to fifty, till the trumpet blared
At the barrier like a wild horn in a land
Of echoes, and a moment, and once more
The trumpet, and again; at which the storm
Of galloping hoofs bare on the ridge of
spears

And riders front to front, until they closed
In conflict with the crash of shivering points,
And thunder. Yet it seem'd a dream, I
dream'd

Of fighting. On his haunches rose the steed,
And into fiery splinters leapt the lance,
And out of stricken helmets sprang the fire.
Part sat like rocks; part reel'd but kept their
seats;

Part roll'd on the earth and rose again and
drew;

Part stumbled mixt with floundering horses.
Down

From those two bulks at Arac's side, and
down

From Arac's arm, as from a giant's flail,
The large blows rain'd, as here and every-
where.

He rode the mellay, lord of the ringing lists,
And all the plain—brand, mace, and shaft,
and shield—

Shock'd, like an iron-clanging anvil bang'd
With hammers; till I thought, can this be he
From Gama's dwarfish loins? if this be so,

A MEDLEY

The mother makes us most—and in my dream
I glanced aside, and saw the palace-front
Alive with fluttering scarfs and ladies' eyes,
And highest, among the statues, statue-like,
Between a cymbal'd Miriam and a Jael,
With Psyche's babe, was Ida watching us,
A single band of gold about her hair,
Like a saint's glory up in heaven; but she,
No saint—inexorable—no tenderness—
Too hard, too cruel. Yet she sees me fight,
Yea, let her see me fall. With that

I drave

Among the thickest and bore down a prince,
And Cyril one. Yea, let me make my dream
All that I would. But that large-moulded
man,

His visage all agrin as at a wake,
Made at me thro' the press, and, staggering
back

With stroke on stroke the horse and horse-
man, came

As comes a pillar of electric cloud,
Flaying the roofs and sucking up the drains,
And shadowing down the champaign till it
strikes

On a wood, and takes, and breaks, and cracks,
and splits,

And twists the grain with such a roar that
Earth

Reels, and the herdsmen cry; for everything
Gave way before him. Only Florian, he
That loved me closer than his own right eye,
Thrust in between; but Arac rode him down.
And Cyril seeing it, push'd against the Prince,
With Psyche's color round his helmet,
tough,

Strong, supple, sinew-corded, apt at arms;
But tougher, heavier, stronger, he that smote
And threw him. Last I spurr'd; I felt my
veins

Stretch with fierce heat; a moment hand to
hand,

And sword to sword, and horse to horse we
hung,

Till I struck out and shouted; the blade
glanced,

I did but shear a feather, and dream and
truth

Flow'd from me; darkness closed me, and I
fell.





S O N G

Home they brought her warrior dead;
She nor swoon'd nor utter'd cry.

Home they brought her warrior dead;
She nor swoon'd nor utter'd cry.
All her maidens, watching, said,
'She must weep or she will die.'

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Call'd him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

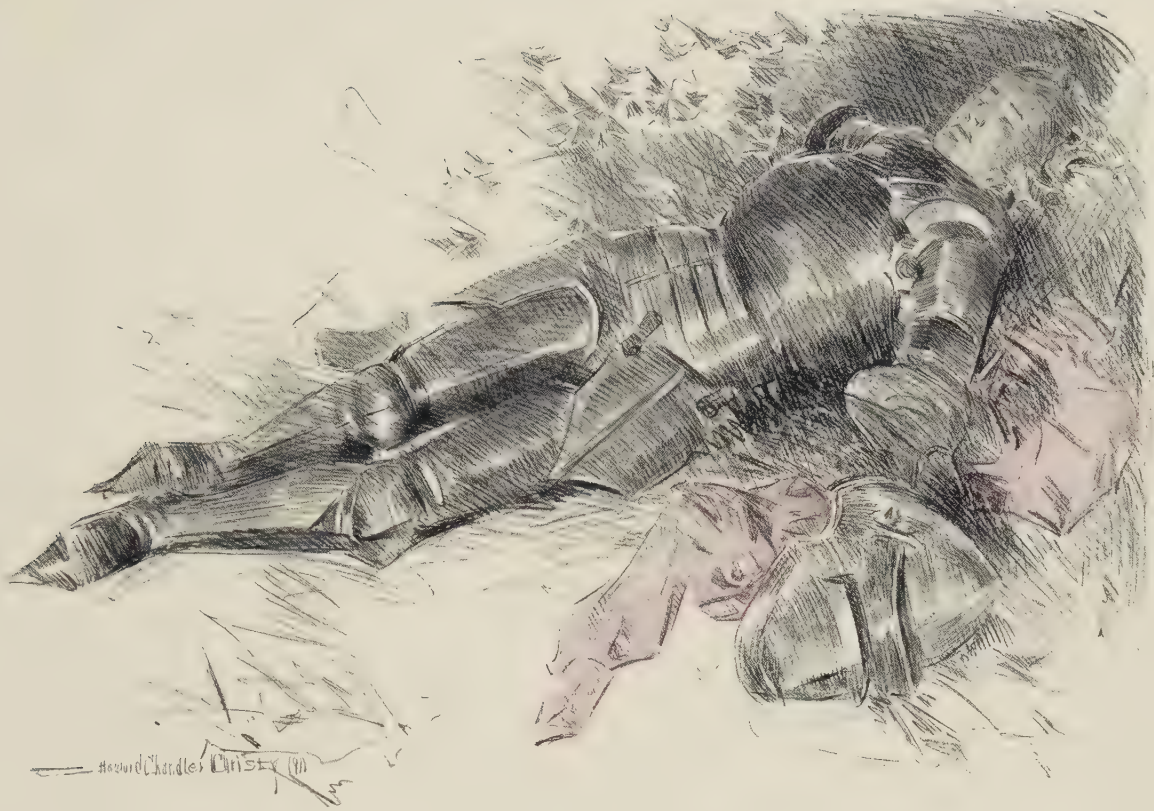
Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior slept,
Took the face-cloth from the face;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee—
Like summer tempest came her tears—
'Sweet my child, I live for thee.'



PART SIX





PART SIX

My dream had never died or lived again;
As in some mystic middle state I lay.
Seeing I saw not, hearing not I heard;
Tho', if I saw not, yet they told me all
So often that I speak as having seen.

For so it seem'd, or so they said to me,
That all things grew more tragic and more
strange;
That when our side was vanquish'd and my
cause

For ever lost, there went up a great cry,
'The Prince is slain!' My father heard and
ran

In on the lists, and there unlaced my casque
And grovell'd on my body, and after him
Came Psyche, sorrowing for Aglaïa.

But high upon the palace Ida stood

With Psyche's babe in arm; there on the
roofs

Like that great dame of Lapidoth she sang.

'Our enemies have fallen, have fallen: the
seed,

The little seed they laugh'd at in the dark,
Has risen and cleft the soil, and grown a bulk
Of spanless girth, that lays on every side
A thousand arms and rushes to the sun.

'Our enemies have fallen, have fallen: they
came;

The leaves were wet with woman's tears; they
heard

A noise of songs they would not understand;
They mark'd it with the red cross to the fall,
And would have strown it, and are fallen
themselves.

THE PRINCESS



'Our enemies have fallen, have fallen: they
came,
The woodmen with their axes: lo the tree!
But we will make it faggots for the hearth,
And shape it plank and beam for roof and
floor,
And boats and bridges for the use of men.

'Our enemies have fallen, have fallen; they
struck;
With their own blows they hurt themselves,
nor knew

There dwelt an iron nature in the grain;
The glittering axe was broken in their arms,
Their arms were shatter'd to the shoulder
blade.

'Our enemies have fallen, but this shall
grow
A night of summer from the heat, a breadth
Of Autumn, dropping fruits of power; and
roll'd
With music in the growing breeze of Time,
The tops shall strike from star to star, the
fangs
Shall move the stony bases of the world.

'And now, O maids, behold our sanctuary
Is violate, our laws broken; fear we not
To break them more in their behoof, whose
arms
Champion'd our cause and won it with a day
Blanch'd in our annals, and perpetual feast,
When dames and heroines of the golden year
Shall strip a hundred hollows bare of Spring,
To rain an April of ovation round
Their statues, borne aloft, the three; but
come,
We will be liberal, since our rights are won.
Let them not lie in the tents with coarse man-
kind,
Ill nurses; but descend, and proffer these
The brethren of our blood and cause, that
there

Lie bruised and maim'd, the tender ministries
Of female hands and hospitality.'

She spoke, and with the babe yet in her
arms,
Descending, burst the great bronze valves,
and led

A hundred maids in train across the park.
Some cowl'd, and some bare-headed, on they
came,

Their feet in flowers, her loveliest. By them
went

The enamor'd air sighing, and on their curls
From the high tree the blossom wavering fell,
And over them the tremulous isles of light
Slided, they moving under shade; but Blanche
At distance follow'd. So they came: anon
Thro' open field into the lists they wound
Timorously; and as the leader of the herd
That holds a stately fretwork to the sun,
And follow'd up by a hundred airy does,
Steps with a tender foot, light as on air,
The lovely, lord'y creature floated on
To where her wounded brethren lay; there
stay'd,

Knelt on one knee,—the child on one,—and
prest

Their hands, and call'd them dear deliverers,
And happy warriors, and immortal names,
And said, 'You shall not lie in the tents, but
here,

And nursed by those for whom you fought,
and served

With female hands and hospitality.'

Then, whether moved by this, or was it
chance,

She past my way. Up started from my side
The old lion, glaring with his whelpless eye,
Silent; but when she saw me lying stark,
Dishelm'd and mute, and motionlessly pale,
Cold even to her, she sigh'd; and when she
saw

The haggard father's face and reverend beard

A MEDLEY

Of grisly twine, all dabbled with the blood
Of his own son, shudder'd, a twitch of pain
Tortured her mouth, and o'er her forehead
past

A shadow, and her hue changed, and she said:
'He saved my life; my brother slew him
for it.'

No more; at which the king in bitter scorn
Drew from my neck the painting and the
tress,

And held them up. She saw them, and a day
Rose from the distance on her memory,
When the good queen, her mother, shore the
tress

With kisses, ere the days of Lady Blanche.
And then once more she look'd at my pale
face;

Till understanding all the foolish work
Of Fancy, and the bitter close of all,
Her iron will was broken in her mind;
Her noble heart was molten in her breast;
She bow'd, she set the child on the earth; she
laid

A feeling finger on my brows, and presently
'O Sire,' she said, 'he lives; he is not dead!
O, let me have him with my brethren here
In our own palace; we will tend on him
Like one of these; if so, by any means,
To lighten this great clog of thanks, that
make

Our progress falter to the woman's goal.'

She said; but at the happy word 'he lives!'
My father stoop'd, re-father'd o'er my
wounds.

So those two foes above my fallen life,
With brow to brow like night and evening
mixt

Their dark and gray, while Psyche ever stole
A little nearer, till the babe that by us,
Half-lapt in glowing gauze and golden brede,
Lay like a new-fallen meteor on the grass,
Uncared for, spied its mother and began
A blind and babbling laughter, and to dance

Its body, and reach its fatling innocent arms
And lazy lingering fingers. She the appeal
Brook'd not, but clamoring out 'Mine—
mine—not yours!

It is not yours, but mine; give me the child!
Ceased all on tremble; piteous was the cry.
So stood the unhappy mother open-mouth'd,
And turn'd each face her way. Wan was her
cheek

With hollow watch, her blooming mantle torn,
Red grief and mother's hunger in her eye,
And down dead-heavy sank her curls, and
half

The sacred mother's bosom, panting, burst
The laces toward her babe; but she nor cared
Nor knew it, clamoring on, till Ida heard,
Look'd up, and rising slowly from me, stood
Erect and silent, striking with her glance
The mother, me, the child. But he that lay
Beside us, Cyril, batter'd as he was,
Trail'd himself up on one knee; then he drew
Her robe to meet his lips, and down she
look'd

At the arm'd man sideways, pitying as it
seem'd,

Or self-involved; but when she learnt his face,
Remembering his ill-omen'd song, arose
Once more thro' all her height, and o'er him
grew

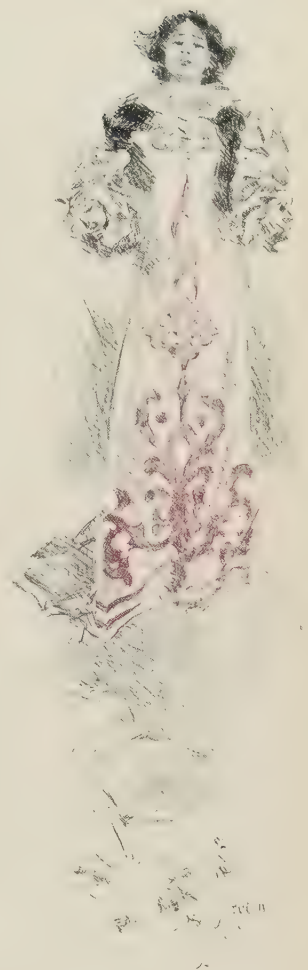
Tall as a figure lengthen'd on the sand
When the tide ebbs in sunshine, and he said:

'O fair and strong and terrible! Lioness
That with your long locks play the lion's
mane!

But Love and Nature, these are two more
terrible

And stronger. See, your foot is on our necks,
We vanquish'd, you the victor of your will.
What would you more? give her the child!
remain

Orb'd in your isolation; he is dead,
Or all as dead: henceforth we let you be.
Win you the hearts of women; and beware



THE PRINCESS



Lest, where you seek the common love of these,
The common hate with the revolving wheel
Should drag you down, and some great
Nemesis

Break from a darken'd future, crown'd with
fire,

And tread you out for ever. But howsoe'er
Fixt in yourself, never in your own arms
To hold your own, deny not hers to her,
Give her the child! O, if, I say, you keep
One pulse that beats true woman, if you loved
The breast that fed or arm that dandled you,
Or own one port of sense not flint to prayer,
Give her the child! or if you scorn to lay it,
Yourself, in hands so lately claspt with yours,
Or speak to her, your dearest, her one fault
The tenderness, not yours, that could not kill,
Give *me* it; *I* will give it her.'

He said.

At first her eye with slow dilation roll'd
Dry flame, she listening; after sank and sank
And, into mournful twilight mellowing, dwelt
Full on the child. She took it: 'Pretty bud!
Lily of the vale! half-open'd bell of the
woods!

Sole comfort of my dark hour, when a world
Of traitorous friend and broken system made
No purple in the distance, mystery,
Pledge of a love not to be mine, farewell!
These men are hard upon us as of old,
We too must part; and yet how fain was I
To dream thy cause embraced in mine, to
think

I might be something to thee, when I felt
Thy helpless warmth about my barren breast
In the dead prime; but may thy mother prove
As true to thee as false, false, false to me!
And, if thou needs must bear the yoke, I
wish it

Gentle as freedom'—here she kiss'd it; then—
'All good go with thee! take it, sir,' and so
Laid the soft babe in his hard-mailed hands,
Who turn'd half-round to Psyche as she
sprang

To meet it, with an eye that swum in thanks;
Then felt it sound and whole from head to
foot,

And hugg'd and never hugg'd it close
enough,

And in her hunger mouth'd and mumbled it,
And hid her bosom with it; after that
Put on more calm and added suppliantly:

'We two were friends: I go to mine own
land

For ever. Find some other; as for me
I scarce am fit for your great plans: yet speak
to me,

Say one soft word and let me part forgiven.'

But Ida spoke not, rapt upon the child.
Then Arac: 'Ida—'sdeath! you blame the
man;

You wrong yourselves—the woman is so hard
Upon the woman. Come, a grace to me!
I am your warrior; I and mine have fought
Your battle. Kiss her; take her hand, she
weeps.

'Sdeath! I would sooner fight thrice o'er than
see it.'

But Ida spoke not, gazing on the ground,
And reddening in the furrows of his chin,
And moved beyond his custom, Gama said:

'I've heard that there is iron in the blood,
And I believe it. Not one word? not one?
Whence drew you this steel temper? not
from me,

Not from your mother, now a saint with
saints.

She said you had a heart—I heard her say it—
"Our Ida has a heart"—just ere she died—
"But see that some one with authority
Be near her still;" and I—I sought for one—
All people said she had authority—
The Lady Blanche—much profit! Not one
word;



A MEDLEY

No! tho' your father sues. See how you stand
 Stiff as Lot's wife, and all the good knights
 maim'd,
 I trust that there is no one hurt to death,
 For your wild whim. And was it then for
 this,
 Was it for this we gave our palace up,
 Where we withdrew from summer heats and
 state,
 And had our wine and chess beneath the
 planes,
 And many a pleasant hour with her that's
 gone,
 Ere you were born to vex us? Is it kind?
 Speak to her, I say; is this not she of whom,
 When first she came, all flush'd you said
 to me,
 Now had you got a friend of your own age,
 Now could you share your thought, now
 should men see
 Two women faster welded in one love
 Than pairs of wedlock? she you walk'd with,
 she
 You talk'd with, whole nights long, up in the
 tower,
 Of sine and arc, spheroid and azimuth,
 And right ascension, heaven knows what; and
 now
 A word, but one, one little kindly word,
 Not one to spare her. Out upon you, flint!
 You love nor her, nor me, nor any; nay,
 You shame your mother's judgment too.
 Not one?
 You will not? well—no heart have you, or
 such
 As fancies like the vermin in a nut
 Have fretted all to dust and bitterness.'
 So said the small king moved beyond his wont.

But Ida stood nor spoke, drain'd of her
 force
 By many a varying influence and so long.
 Down thro' her limbs a drooping languor
 wept;

Her head a little bent; and on her mouth
 A doubtful smile dwelt like a clouded moon
 In a still water. Then brake out my sire,
 Lifting his grim head from my wounds:

'O you,
 Woman, whom we thought woman even now,
 And were half fool'd to let you tend our son,
 Because he might have wish'd it—but we see
 The accomplice of your madness unforgiven,
 And think that you might mix his draught
 with death,
 When your skies change again; the rougher
 hand
 Is safer. On to the tents; take up the Prince.'

He rose, and while each ear was prick'd to
 attend
 A tempest, thro' the cloud that dimm'd her
 broke
 A genial warmth and light once more, and
 shone
 Thro' glittering drops on her sad friend.

'Come hither,
 O Psyche,' she cried out, 'embrace me, come,
 Quick while I melt; make reconciliation sure
 With one that cannot keep her mind
 an hour;

Come to the hollow heart they slander so!
 Kiss and be friends, like children being chid!
 I seem no more, I want forgiveness too;
 I should have had to do with none but maids,
 That have no links with men. Ah false but
 dear,
 Dear traitor, too much loved, why?—why?—
 yet see

Before these kings we embrace you yet once
 more
 With all forgiveness, all oblivion,
 And trust, not love, you less.

And now, O Sire,
 Grant me your son, to nurse, to wait upon
 him,
 Like mine own brother. For my debt to him,
 This nightmare weight of gratitude, I know it.



THE PRINCESS



Taunt me no more; yourself and yours shall
have

Free adit; we will scatter all our maids
Till happier times each to her proper hearth.
What use to keep them here—now? grant my
prayer.

Help, father, brother, help; speak to the
king;

Thaw this male nature to some touch of that
Which kills me with myself, and drags me
down

From my fixt height to mob me up with all
The soft and milky rabble of womankind,
Poor weakling even as they are.'

Passionate tears

Follow'd; the king replied not; Cyril said:
'Your brother, lady,—Florian,—ask for him
Of your great Head—for he is wounded too—
That you may tend upon him with the
Prince.'

'Ay, so,' said Ida with a bitter smile,
'Our laws are broken; let him enter too.
Then Violet, she that sang the mournful song,
And had a cousin tumbled on the plain,
Petition'd too for him. 'Ay, so,' she said,
'I stagger in the stream; I cannot keep
My heart an eddy from the brawling hour.
We break our laws with ease, but let it be.'
'Ay, so?' said Blanche: 'Amazed am I to hear
Your Highness; but your Highness breaks
with ease

The law your Highness did not make; 'twas I.
I had been wedded wife, I knew mankind,
And block'd them out; but these men came to
woo

Your Highness,—verily I think to win.'

So she, and turn'd askance a wintry eye;
But Ida, with a voice that, like a bell
Toll'd by an earthquake in a trembling tower,
Rang ruin, answer'd full of grief and scorn;

'Fling our doors wide! all, all, not one, but
all,

Not only he, but by my mother's soul,
Whatever man lies wounded, friend or foe,
Shall enter, if he will! Let our girls flit,
Till the storm die! but had you stood by us,
The roar that breaks the Pharos from his
base

Had left us rock. She fain would sting us
too,

But shall not. Pass, and mingle with your
likes.

We brook no further insult, but are gone.'

She turn'd; the very nape of her white neck
Was rosed with indignation; but the Prince
Her brother came; the king her father
charm'd

Her wounded soul with words; nor did mine
own

Refuse her proffer, lastly gave his hand.

Then us they lifted up, dead weights, and
bare
Straight to the doors; to them the doors gave
way

Groaning, and in the vestal entry shriek'd
The virgin marble under iron heels.
And on they moved and gain'd the hall and
there

Rested; but great the crush was, and each
base,

To left and right, of those tall columns
drown'd

In silken fluctuation and the swarm
Of female whispers. At the further end
Was Ida by the throne, the two great cats
Close by her, like supporters on a shield,
Bow-back'd with fear; but in the centre stood
The common men with rolling eyes; amazed
They glared upon the women, and aghast
The women stared at these, all silent, save
When armor clash'd or jingled, while the
day,

A MEDLEY

Descending, struck athwart the hall and shot
A flying splendor out of brass and steel,
That o'er the statues leapt from head to head,
Now fired an angry Pallas on the helm,
Now set a wrathful Dian's moon on flame;
And now and then an echo started up,
And shuddering fled from room to room, and
died
Of fright in far apartments.

Then the voice
Of Ida sounded, issuing ordinance;
And me they bore up the broad stairs, and
thro'

The long-laid galleries past a hundred doors
To one deep chamber shut from sound, and
due

To languid limbs and sickness, left me in it;
And others elsewhere they laid; and all
That afternoon a sound arose of hoof
And chariot, many a maiden passing home
Till happier times; but some were left
of those

Held sagest, and the great lords out and in,
From those two hosts that lay beside the wall,
Walk'd at their will, and everything was
changed.





S O N G

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;
The clud may stoop from heaven and take
the shape,

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take
the shape,
With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape;
But O too fond, when have I answer'd thee?
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I give?
I love not hollow cheek or faded eye:
Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!
Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are seal'd;
I strove against the stream and all in vain;
Let the great river take me to the main.
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;
Ask me no more.



PART SEVEN





PART SEVEN

So was their sanctuary violated,
So their fair college turn'd to hospital,
At first with all confusion; by and by
Sweet order lived again with other laws,
A kindlier influence reign'd, and everywhere
Low voices with the ministering hand
Hung round the sick. The maidens came,
 they talk'd,
They sang, they read; till she not fair began
To gather light, and she that was became
Her former beauty treble; and to and fro
With books, with flowers, with angel offices,
Like creatures native unto gracious act,
And in their own clear element, they moved.

But sadness on the soul of Ida fell,
And hatred of her weakness, blent with
 shame.
Old studies fail'd; seldom she spoke; but oft

Clomb to the roofs, and gazed alone for hours
On that disastrous leaguer, swarms of men
Darkening her female field. Void was her
 use,

And she as one that climbs a peak to gaze
O'er land and main, and sees a great black
 cloud

Drag inward from the deeps, a wall of night,
Blot out the slope of sea from verge to shore,
And suck the blinding splendor from the
 sand,

And quenching lake by lake and tarn by tarn
Expunge the world; so fared she gazing
 there,

So blacken'd all her world in secret, blank
And waste it seem'd and vain; till down she
 came,

And found fair peace once more among the
 sick.

THE PRINCESS



And twilight dawn'd; and morn by morn
the lark
Shot up and shrill'd in flickering gyres, but I
Lay silent in the muffled cage of life.
And twilight gloom'd, and broader-grown the
bowers
Drew the great night into themselves, and
heaven,
Star after star, arose and fell; but I,
Deeper than those weird doubts could reach
me, lay
Quite sunder'd from the moving Universe,
Nor knew what eye was on me, nor the hand
That nursed me, more than infants in their
sleep.

But Psyche tended Florian; with her oft
Melissa came, for Blanche had gone,
but left

Her child among us, willing she should keep
Court-favor. Here and there the small bright
head,

A light of healing, glanced about the couch,
Or thro' the parted silks the tender face
Peep'd, shining in upon the wounded man
With blush and smile, a medicine in them-
selves

To wile the length from languorous hours,
and draw

The sting from pain; nor seem'd it strange
that soon

He rose up whole, and those fair charities
Join'd at her side; nor stranger seem'd that
hearts

So gentle, so employ'd, should close in love,
Than when two dewdrops on the petal shake
To the same sweet air, and tremble deeper
down,

And slip at once all-fragrant into one.

Less prosperously the second suit obtain'd
At first with Psyche. Not tho' Blanche had
sworn

That after that dark night among the fields

She needs must wed him for her own good
name;

Not tho' he built upon the babe restored;
Not tho' she liked him, yielded she, but fear'd
To incense the Head once more; till on a day
When Cyril pleaded, Ida came behind
Seen but of Psyche; on her foot she hung
A moment, and she heard, at which her face
A little flush'd, and she past on; but each
Assumed from thence a half-consent involved
In stillness, plighted troth, and were at peace.

Nor only these; Love in the sacred halls
Held carnival at will, and flying struck
With showers of random sweet on maid and
man.

Nor did her father cease to press my claim,
Nor did mine own now reconciled; nor yet
Did those twin brothers, risen again and
whole;

Nor Arac, satiate with his victory.

But I lay still, and with me oft she sat.
Then came a change; for sometimes I would
catch

Her hand in wild delirium, gripe it hard,
And fling it like a viper off, and shriek,
'You are not Ida;' clasp it once again,
And call her Ida, tho' I knew her not,
And call her sweet, as if in irony,
And call her hard and cold, which seem'd a
truth;

And still she fear'd that I should lose my
mind,

And often she believed that I should die;
Till out of long frustration of her care,
And pensive tendance in the all-weary noons,
And watches in the dead, the dark, when
clocks

Throbb'd thunder thro' the palace floors, or
call'd

On flying Time from all their silver tongues—
And out of memories of her kindlier days,
And sidelong glances at my father's grief,



A MEDLEY

And at the happy lovers heart in heart—
And out of hauntings of my spoken love,
And lonely listenings to my mutter'd dream,
And often feeling of the helpless hands,
And wordless broodings on the wasted cheek—
From all a closer interest flourish'd up,
Tenderness touch by touch, and last, to these,
Love, like an Alpine harebell hung with tears
By some cold morning glacier; frail at first
And feeble, all unconscious of itself,
But such as gather'd color day by day.

Last I woke sane, but well-nigh close to
death
For weakness. It was evening; silent light
Slept on the painted walls, wherein were
wrought
Two grand designs; for on one side arose
The women up in wild revolt, and storm'd
At the Oppian law. Titanic shapes, they
cramm'd
The forum, and half-crush'd among the rest
A dwarf-like Cato cower'd. On the other side
Hortensia spoke against the tax; behind,
A train of dames. By axe and eagle sat,
With all their foreheads drawn in Roman
scowls,
And half the wolf's-milk curdled in their
veins,
The fierce triumvirs; and before them paused
Hortensia, pleading; angry was her face.

I saw the forms; I knew not where I was.
They did but look like hollow shows; nor more
Sweet Ida. Palm to palm she sat; the dew
Dwelt in her eyes, and softer all her shape
And rounder seem'd. I moved, I sigh'd; a
touch
Came round my wrist, and tears upon my
hand.
Then all for languor and self-pity ran
Mine down my face, and with what life I had,
And like a flower that cannot all unfold,
So drench'd it is with tempest, to the sun,

Yet, as it may, turns toward him, I on her
Fixt my faint eyes, and utter'd whisperingly:

'If you be what I think you, some sweet
dream,
I would but ask you to fulfil yourself;
But if you be that Ida whom I knew,
I ask you nothing; only, if a dream,
Sweet dream, be perfect. I shall die to-night.
Stoop down and seem to kiss me ere I die.'

I could no more, but lay like one in trance,
That hears his burial talk'd of by his friends,
And cannot speak, nor move, nor make one
sign,
But lies and dreads his doom. She turn'd,
she paused,
She stoop'd; and out of languor leapt a cry,
Leapt fiery Passion from the brinks of death,
And I believed that in the living world
My spirit closed with Ida's at the lips;
Till back I fell, and from mine arms she rose
Glowing all over noble shame; and all
Her falser self slipt from her like a robe,
And left her woman, lovelier in her mood
Than in her mould that other, when she came
From barren deeps to conquer all with love,
And down the streaming crystal dropt; and
she
Far-fleeted by the purple island-sides,
Naked, a double light in air and wave,
To meet her Graces, where they deck'd her out
For worship without end—nor end of mine,
Stateliest, for thee! but mute she glided forth,
Nor glanced behind her, and I sank and slept,
Fill'd thro' and thro' with love, a happy sleep.

Deep in the night I woke: she, near me,
held
A volume of the poets of her land.
There to herself, all in low tones, she read:

'Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the
white;



THE PRINCESS

Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font.
The fire-fly wakens; waken thou with me.

‘Now droops the milk-white peacock like a
ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

‘Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

‘Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

‘Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake.
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me.’

I heard her turn the page; she found a
small
Sweet idyl, and once more, as low, she read:

‘Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain
height.
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd
sang),
In height and cold, the splendor of the hills?
But cease to move so near the heavens, and
cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted pine,
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
For Love is of the valley, come thou down
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,
Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk
With Death and Morning on the Silver
Horns,
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors.

But follow; let the torrent dance thee down
To find him in the valley; let the wild
Lean-headed eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-
smoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air.
So waste not thou, but come; for all the vales
Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee; the children call, and I
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet,
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro’ the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.’

So she low-toned, while with shut eyes I lay
Listening, then look’d. Pale was the perfect
face;
The bosom with long sighs labor’d; and meek
Seem’d the full lips, and mild the luminous
eyes,
And the voice trembled and the hand. She
said
Brokenly, that she knew it, she had fail’d
In sweet humility, had fail’d in all;
That all her labor was but as a block
Left in the quarry; but she still were loth,
She still were loth to yield herself to one
That wholly scorn’d to help their equal rights
Against the sons of men and barbarous laws.
She pray’d me not to judge their cause from
her
That wrong’d it, sought far less for truth
than power
In knowledge. Something wild within her
breast,
A greater than all knowledge, beat her down.
And she had nursed me there from week to
week;
Much had she learnt in little time. In part
It was ill counsel had misled the girl
To vex true hearts; yet was she but a girl—
‘Ah fool, and made myself a queen of farce!’



A MEDLEY

When comes another such? never, I think,
Till the sun drop, dead, from the signs.'

Her voice

Choked, and her forehead sank upon her
hands,

And her great heart thro' all the faultful past
Went sorrowing in a pause I dared not break;
Till notice of a change in the dark world
Was lispt about the acacias, and a bird,
That early woke to feed her little ones,
Sent from a dewy breast a cry for light.
She moved, and at her feet the volume fell.

'Blame not thyself too much,' I said, 'nor
blame

Too much the sons of men and barbarous
laws;

These were the rough ways of the world till
now.

Henceforth thou hast a helper, me, that know
The woman's cause is man's; they rise or sink
Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or free.
For she that out of Lethe scales with man
The shining steps of Nature, shares with
man

His nights, his days, moves with him to one
goal,

Stays all the fair young planet in her hands—
If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
How shall men grow? but work no more alone
Our place is much; as far as in us lies
We two will serve them both in aiding her—
Will clear away the parasitic forms
That seem to keep her up but drag her
down—

Will leave her space to burgeon out of all
Within her—let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse. Could we make her as the man,
Sweet Love were slain; his dearest bond is
this,

Not like to like, but like in difference.

Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the
world;

She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;
Till at the last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words;
And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their
powers,

Dispensing harvest, sowing the to-be,
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other even as those who love.
Then comes the statelier Eden back to men;
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste
and calm;

Then springs the crowning race of human-
kind.

May these things be?

Sighing she spoke: 'I fear
They will not.'

'Dear, but let us type them now
In our own lives, and this proud watchword
rest

Of equal; seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal. Each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in
thought,

Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-cell'd heart beating, with one full
stroke,
Life.'

And again sighing she spoke: 'A dream
That once was mine! what woman taught
you this?'

'Alone,' I said, 'from earlier than I know,
Immersed in rich foreshadowings of the world,
I loved the woman. He, that doth not, lives



THE PRINCESS

A drowning life, besotted in sweet self,
Or pines in sad experience worse than death,
Or keeps his wing'd affections clipt with
crime.

Yet was there one thro' whom I loved her, one
Not learned, save in gracious household
ways,

Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
No angel, but a dearer being, all dipt
In angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
Interpreter between the gods and men,
Who look'd all native to her place, and yet
On tiptoe seem'd to touch upon a sphere
Too gross to tread, and all male minds per-
force

Sway'd to her from their orbits as they
moved,

And girdled her with music. Happy he
With such a mother! faith in womankind
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things
high

Comes easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall
He shall not blind his soul with clay.'

'But I,'

Said Ida, tremulously, 'so all unlike—
It seems you love to cheat yourself with
words:

This mother is your model. I have heard
Of your strange doubts; they well might be;
I seem

A mockery to my own self. Never, Prince!
You cannot love me.'

'Nay, but thee,' I said,
'From yearlong poring on thy pictured eyes,

Ere seen I loved, and loved thee seen, and
saw

Thee woman thro' the crust of iron moods
That mask'd thee from men's reverence up,
and forced

Sweet love on pranks of saucy boyhood; now,
Given back to life, to life indeed, thro' thee,
Indeed I love. The new day comes, the light
Dearer for night, as dearer thou for faults
Lived over. Lift thine eyes; my doubts are
dead,

My haunting sense of hollow shows; the
change,

'This truthful change in thee has kill'd it.
Dear,

Look up, and let thy nature strike on mine,
Like yonder morning on the blind halfworld.
Approach and fear not; breathe upon my
brows;

In that fine air I tremble, all the past
Melts mist-like into this bright hour, and this
Is morn to more, and all the rich to-come
Reels, as the golden Autumn woodland reels
Athwart the smoke of burning weeds. For-
give me,

I waste my heart in signs; let be. My bride,
My wife, my life! O, we will walk this world,
Yoked in all exercises of noble end,
And so thro' those dark gates across the wild
That no man knows. Indeed I love thee;
come,

Yield thyself up; my hopes and thine are one.
Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself;
Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me.'



CONCLUSION



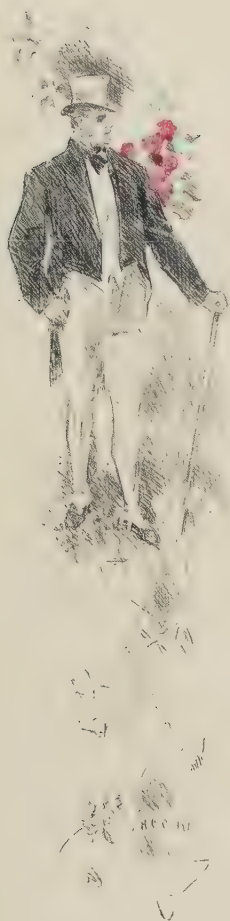


CONCLUSION

So closed our tale, of which I give you all
 The random scheme as wildly as it rose.
 The words are mostly mine; for when we
 ceased
 There came a minute's pause, and Walter
 said,
 'I wish she had not yielded!' then to me,
 'What if you drest it up poetically?'
 So pray'd the men, the women; I gave assent.
 Yet how to bind the scatter'd scheme of seven
 Together in one sheaf? What style could
 suit?
 The men required that I should give through-
 out
 The sort of mock-heroic gigantesque,
 With which we banter'd little Lilia first;
 The women—and perhaps they felt their
 power,
 For something in the ballads which they sang,
 Or in their silent influence as they sat,

Had ever seem'd to wrestle with burlesque,
 And drove us, last, to quite a solemn
 close—
 They hated banter, wish'd for something
 real,
 A gallant fight, a noble prince—why
 Not make her true-heroic—true sublime?
 Or all, they said, as earnest as the close?
 Which yet with such a framework scarce
 could be.
 Then rose a little feud betwixt the two,
 Betwixt the mockers and the realists;
 And I, betwixt them both, to please them
 both,
 And yet to give the story as it rose,
 I moved as in a strange diagonal,
 And maybe neither pleased myself nor them.
 But Lilia pleased me, for she took no part
 In our dispute; the sequel of the tale

THE PRINCESS



Had touch'd her, and she sat, she pluck'd the
grass,

She flung it from her, thinking; but, she fixt
A showery glance upon her aunt, and said,
'You—tell us what we are'—who might have
told,

For she was cramm'd with theories out of
books,

But that there rose a shout. The gates were
closed

At sunset, and the crowd were swarming now,
To take their leave, about the garden rails.

So I and some went out to these; we climb'd
The slope to Vivian-place, and turning saw
The happy valleys, half in light, and half
Far-shadowing from the west, a land of peace;
Gray halls alone among their massive groves;
Trim hamlets; here and there a rustic tower
Half-lost in belts of hop and breadths of
wheat;

The shimmering glimpses of a stream; the
seas;

A red sail, or a white; and far beyond,
Imagined more than seen, the skirts of
France.

'Look there, a garden!' said my college
friend,

The Tory member's elder son, 'and there!
God bless the narrow sea which keeps her off,
And keeps our Britain, whole within herself,
A nation yet, the rulers and the ruled—
Some sense of duty, something of a faith,
Some reverence for the laws ourselves have
made,

Some patient force to change them when we
will,

Some civic manhood firm against the crowd—
But yonder, whiff! there comes a sudden heat,
The gravest citizen seems to lose his head,
The king is scared, the soldier will not fight,
The little boys begin to shoot and stab,
A kingdom topples over with a shriek

Like an old woman, and down rolls the world
In mock heroics stranger than our own;
Revolts, republics, revolutions, most
No graver than a schoolboys' barring out;
Too comic for the solemn things they are,
Too solemn for the comic touches in them,
Like our wild Princess with as wise a dream
As some of theirs—God bless the narrow seas!
I wish they were a whole Atlantic broad.'

'Have patience,' I replied, 'ourselves are
full

Of social wrong; and maybe wildest dreams
Are but the needful preludes of the truth.
For me, the genial day, the happy crowd,
The sport half-science, fill me with a faith,
This fine old world of ours is but a child
Yet in the go-cart. Patience! Give it time
To learn its limbs; there is a hand that
guides.'

In such discourse we gain'd the garden
rails,

And there we saw Sir Walter where he stood,
Before a tower of crimson holly-oaks,
Among six boys, head under head, and look'd
No little lily-handed baronet he,
A great broad-shouldered genial Englishman,
A lord of fat prize-oxen and of sheep,
A raiser of huge melons and of pine,
A patron of some thirty charities,
A pamphleteer on guano and on grain,
A quarter-sessions chairman, abler none;
Fair-hair'd and redder than a windy morn;
Now shaking hands with him, now him, of
those

That stood the nearest—now address'd to
speech—

Who spoke few words and pithy, such as
closed

Welcome, farewell, and welcome for the year
To follow. A shout rose again, and made
The long line of the approaching rookery
swerve

A MEDLEY

From the elms, and shook the branches of the
deer

From slope to slope thro' distant ferns, and
rang

Beyond the bourn of sunset—O, a shout
More joyful than the city-roar that hails
Premier or king! Why should not these great
sirs

Give up their parks some dozen times a year
To let the people breathe? So thrice they
cried,

I likewise, and in groups they stream'd away.

But we went back to the Abbey, and sat on,
So much the gathering darkness charm'd;
we sat

But spoke not, rapt in nameless reverie,
Perchance upon the future man. The walls
Blacken'd about us, bats wheel'd, and owls
whcop'd,

And gradually the powers of the night,
That range above the region of the wind,
Deepening the courts of twilight broke
them up

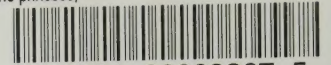
Thro' all the silent spaces of the worlds,
Beyond all thought into the heaven of
heavens.

Last little Lilia, rising quietly,
Disrobed the glimmering statue of Sir Ralph
From those rich silks, and home well-pleased
we went.

THE END



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